

JOHN WESLEY'S UNDERSTANDING OF SALVATION
AS A GUIDELINE TO TREATING ADULT
FEMALE INCEST SURVIVORS

by

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This project is dedicated to those women who have been caught up in the web of alienation and brokenness because of their shattered childhoods due to incest. It is my earnest prayer that this project may in some way bring into reality for them the presence of God--whose presence, grace and love has sustained and upheld me.

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ABSTRACT

This project has examined a major crisis of which we are only now naming--incest. While incest is not a new phenomenon, it is in the sense that the "secret" that has surrounded and enveloped it for so many years is only now being lifted.

The purpose of this project was to examine both the theological and psychological implications of childhood incest on adult female incest survivors and to find a new means of treating them. This has been carried out through an examination of John Wesley's understanding of the order of salvation; and in dialog with contemporary feminist theologians and therapists. Together these two disciplines--the theological and the clinical--have been interfaced, each correcting and enhancing the others contribution to what it is to be fully alive and connected with God, self and neighbor.

Out of this project developed an understanding and reframing of sin and repentance as it relates to the adult female incest survivor. As a result of this investigation, I believe, a new beginning point in the treatment of incest survivors has been proven and further, this new reference point will enable the survivor to transcend her current reality of chaos and alienation by enabling her to enter into a new reality that will heal her brokenness, restore her to wholeness, and will redeem her past.

Chapter 1

INTRODUCTION

Scope of the Problem

Increased awareness of violence against women and children has caused professionals in the helping professions and laypeople alike to become more alert. Documentation of the problem of violence in American families is at best uncertain and incomplete.

For a long time, incest was thought to be an ill of the lower socio-economic classes. This view was probably perpetuated because most of the studies done on incest were conducted in prisons and jails. However, with more recent studies conducted in a variety of situations researchers such as Rush, NiCarthy, Herman, and Sgroi are finding that incest cuts across races, classes and nations. Estimates of sexual abuse run as high as three percent and still other studies indicate one out of every four of the women in the United States is a victim of sexual molestation by the time she reaches the age of eighteen years.¹ These statistics do not include those cases that are not known. These kinds of staggering statistics have caused many people to ask if family violence in general and incest in particular is on the increase--especially in light of all the recent media coverage.

Ginny NiCarthy in her book Getting Free: A Handbook for Women in Abusive Relationships, writing on a similar, yet all too often

¹Estimates of reported incidences of sexual abuse were given at a conference on "Victims of Violence and the Religious Community," Orange, California, June 1984.

related problem--wife battering, quotes philosopher John Stuart Mill regarding his reflections on abusive patterns in history:

From the earliest twilight of human society, every woman, was found in a state of bondage to some man...How vast is the number of men in any great country, who are little higher than brutes, and...this never prevents them from being able, through the laws of marriage, to obtain a victim...The vilest male factor has some wretched woman tied to him, against whom he can commit any atrocity except killing her...and even that he can do without too much danger of legal penalty.²

A study conducted by Vincent DeFrancis of the American Humane Society of 263 child victims of sexual abuse proposed that though incidents are of unknown national dimensions,:

Findings strongly point to the probability of an enormous national incidence many times larger than reported incidents of physical abuse of children. (And further) Carol Swift, Director of Prevention Projects, Wyandot Mental Health Center, in a presentation to a Congressional Committee estimated that fifty to eighty percent of all incidents go unreported. (In addition the Kinsey team) in a random study of four thousand American women found that twenty-five percent had experienced a sexual encounter with an adult before the age of thirteen. David Finkelhor, a research scientist at the University of New Hampshire, in his study of 796 college students found that of the 530 female subjects, 19.2 percent had been victimized in childhood, and of the 226 male subjects, 8.6 percent had been victimized. The Kinsey percentage is often projected as representative of 25 percent of the female population; hence, approximately twenty-five million women in the United States will experience sex with a male adult before age thirteen.³

Suzanne Sgroi writing on the problem of incest and the lack of understanding and response to it by the professional community indicates that it was not until the mid-1970s that there was any significant acknowledgement by the professional community (and public) "that large

²Ginny NiCarthy, Getting Free: A Handbook for Women in Abuse Relationships (Seattle: Seal Press, 1982) p. 3.

³Florence Rush, The Best Kept Secret: Sexual Abuse of Children (New York: McGraw-Hill, 1980) pp. 4-5.

numbers of children had been and are sexually abused by their relatives and caretakers."⁴ She goes on to point out that:

Only a handful of established child sexual abuse intervention programs existed in 1981; and that only one, the Child Sexual Abuse Treatment Program of Santa Clara County, California, has been offering offender and family treatment mandated by the criminal justice system for more than five years.⁵

As a result of the lackadaisical attitude of the professional community toward this problem, clinicians and child-care workers were remiss, if not negligent in developing skills and implementing programs in treating both the victim and offender. More than a decade later, we are beginning to see this attitude change among both professionals and layworkers alike. Treatment and intervention centers, halfway houses for the victim, cooperative daycare centers where parents rotate in and out of classrooms as teacher's assistants, stricter legal consequences for offenders, and stronger reporting laws are being sought after and mandated by public awareness and outrage.

In light of the figures being reported by researchers of the number of females who will be sexually assaulted by the time they are thirteen and the unpreparedness of the professional community and public in general, one might be lead to ask why--why has this persisted and why are we moving so slowly in response to it? I believe there are several reasons why incest is such a difficult problem for us to face.

First, incest is a reflection of the larger problem of family violence. Examining violence in the family informs us about ourselves and the kinds of assumptions we knowingly or unknowingly make and live,

⁵Ibid.

which may be why so many people discount stories of incest or else are so repulsed by them that they cannot cope at all.

In a recent fact sheet prepared by the California Commission on the Status of Women (March 1984) the following statistics reflect the larger problem of family violence:

- 1) Nearly 6 million women are abused by their husbands every year. In this country a woman is battered every 15 seconds. According to the FBI, the actual incidence is 10 times higher than the assaults reported.
- 2) Some 2,000 to 4,000 women are beaten to death annually.
- 3) The nation's police spend 1/3 of their time responding to domestic violence calls. Statistics indicate that 40% of all police injuries and 20% of all police deaths on duty are the result of becoming involved in family disputes.
- 4) Physical abuse is the single major cause of injury to women, more significant than auto accidents, rapes or missings.
- 5) In 1979, the FBI reported that 40% of women killed were murdered by their partners and 10% of men by theirs (many of the women acted in self defense).
- 6) According to a 4-year study completed by a major metropolitan hospital this year, 25% of all women's suicide attempts are preceded by a prior history of battery.
- 7) A recent study of 250 cases of domestic violence conducted by the Minneapolis Police Department, revealed that only 10% of the men arrested for wife beating repeated that offense within 6 months compared to 24% of those banished from their residences for at least 8 hours and 17% of those involved in mediation.
- 8) In examining reasons for the dismissal of felony cases, the Vera Institute of Justice found that victim noncooperation was the stated cause of dismissal in 92% of the cases where a relationship existed between the victim and the assailant.
- 9) The National Center on Child Abuse and Neglect documents that 20% of substantial child abuse cases involve spousal assault. in 70% of these cases the man was violent to both.
- 10) Studies indicate that in 25% of the cases where babies are battered the father/husband also battered the wife. (California Commission on the Status of Women, March 1981.) A minimum of 3,000 children are killed by their parents every year in the United States. Over 750,000 cases of child abuse and neglect are reported.⁶

⁶ California Commission on the Status of Women, "Fact Sheet on Domestic Violence" (Sacramento: Office of the Attorney General, March, 1984) p. 1.

Second, is our confusion between sexual activity and sexual violence. "Sexual violence, as Marie Fortune points out, is first and foremost an act of violence, hatred and aggression."⁷ Fortune continues to state that:

The confusion between sexual activity and sexual violence is rooted in a complex set of habits that are integral to the process of male and female socialization. They promote and sustain the thinking that there is no difference between sexual activity and sexual violence. This view is so deeply rooted in our culture that it has come to be regarded as a part of human nature. In fact, their beliefs are indicative of a false consciousness which survives because few people are willing to question the norm.⁸

Third, when we are faced with the issue of incest we are faced with the issue of power within the family (and society at large). Who has the power? Who can use their power? What is power? What is the responsible use of power? These are all questions intricately woven into the fabric of our very lives. We are influenced by power, whether ours or another's. We come to understand the use and meaning of power through our experiences, for experience is the basis of our knowledge, and of how we interact with others and our environment. For a woman who has been raped, or a wife who has been battered, or a child who has been molested, the environment is not a safe one. Their personal power to control their own bodies is no longer theirs, therefore their experience informs them that their environment is not to be trusted. The irony behind the power issue is that the perpetrator feels as powerless as his victims. However, through the sheer power of his body, he becomes all powerful by taking away from his victim her ultimate

⁷Marie M. Fortune, Sexual Violence the Unmentionable Sin: An Ethical and Pastoral Perspective (New York: Pilgrim Press, 1983) p. 5.

⁸Ibid., p. 16.

power of control over her body.

Fourth, for those of us in the theological community we must face the issues of retelling and reinterpreting the Biblical tradition, thereby reshaping and redefining Christian social ethics. It has indeed been unfortunate that with the advent of time we have inherited a hermeneutic shaped by a dominant culture story and system--patriarchy. Too long women and their story have either been erased or misinterpreted by theologians passed down to us through the eyes, ears, hearts, minds, consciences, and understandings of men.

As Christians, Marie Fortune calls us to a "clear and unflinching understanding of the ethical and theological dimensions of sexual violence"⁹ in order that we might be "provided with the foundation for both a pastoral and political/social response to the problem."¹⁰ To face incest means that we must be about the task of reshaping and reframing our theological and ethical questions and presuppositions, in order that we begin to ask the right questions.

...what in this Christian tradition challenges us to a response of justice? How are we to understand and interpret sexual violence as an experience of suffering in light of our faith? How does the relationships between sexuality and sexual violence affect our understanding of Christian sexual ethics? How has our understanding of Christian sexual ethics contributed to our unresponsiveness to sexual violence?¹¹

For the theological community to begin to address these kinds of questions would be to introduce a new reality for the sexually abused victims.

⁹Ibid., p. 43

¹⁰Ibid.

¹¹Ibid.

This project will build on my understanding of Wesley's Order of Salvation as a reference and beginning point for moving toward a new reality for sexually abused victims. It will seek to develop this overarching reality by integrating both theological and clinical realities in a model for use by pastoral counselors.

Thesis

It is my contention that the time has come for pastoral counselors and religious leaders to join with secular clinicians and agencies in order to bring together our specialized skills, insights and personal gifts for the purpose of healing, intervening and addressing the catastrophic devastation of incest on the victims, offenders and society at large. As Marie Fortune points out:

The crisis of family violence affects people physically, psychologically and spiritually. Each of the dimensions must be addressed, both for the victims and for those in the family who abuse them. Approached from either a secular or religious perspective alone, certain needs and issues tend to be disregarded. This reflects a serious lack of understanding of the nature of family violence and its impact on people's lives. Treatment of families experiencing violence and abuse requires interpreting the needs of the whole person. Thus, the importance of developing a shared understanding and cooperation between secular and religious helpers to deal with family violence cannot be emphasized too strongly.¹²

When confronted with personal trauma in the form of violence, basic questions of personal existence and meaning arise for those involved. "Very basic life questions arise and are usually expressed in religious and/or philosophical terms."¹³ Questions like what have

¹²Marie M. Fortune, "Commentary on Religious Issues in Family Violence," Family Violence: A Workshop Manual for Clergy and Other Service Providers (Seattle: Center for the Prevention of Sexual and Domestic Violence, 1982) p. 71.

¹³Fortune, Sexual Violence, p. 71.

I done to bring this on? Where is God in all of this? God must be punishing me for something? People confronting the problem of good and evil are all "indications of their efforts to understand their experiences and to place the experience in a context of meaning for their lives."¹⁴

John Wesley refers to this kind of growth as working out our own salvation, becoming sanctified moving toward health and wholeness. This project will focus on the contribution of Wesley's understanding of the Order of Salvation and the contribution of clinical expertise each being in dialog with the other in the healing of persons, especially women, who have been sexually assaulted as children. Brought together, each correcting and contributing to the other, bring a new quality of life to the survivor.

In addition, this project is designed to assist and inform pastoral counselors in introducing a survivor into a new reality, by breaking the silence of her kept secret, in order that she might enter into the process of sanctification, that journey of being made whole. As pastoral counselors we have at our disposal those means by which we can bring together the healing of the whole person.

The pastoral counselor holds a unique position within the social services community. We not only have at our disposal psychological methods and techniques but we are the channels of God's grace in the world. We are, in the words of Henri Nouwen, the "living reminders"¹⁵

¹⁴Ibid.

¹⁵Henri J. M. Nouwen, The Living Reminder: Service and Prayer In Memory of Jesus Christ (New York: Seabury Press, 1977) Front Cover.

of God's presence. If we are to take seriously that sexual violence affects the whole person, physically, psychologically and spiritually, the pastoral counselor then provides the means by which all three are brought together by introducing the sexually abused person into the new reality of relationship with herself, her God, and her neighbor.

Definition of Major Terms

The term incest comes from the Middle English and Latin "incestus, unchaste, impure." The meaning given in the American Heritage Dictionary is

Sexual union between persons who are so closely related that their marriage is illegal or forbidden by custom. The statutory crime committed by such closely related persons who marry, cohabit or copulate illegally.¹⁶

The term unchaste comes from the term "chaste," meaning "morally pure, decent, modest. Abstaining from unlawful sexual intercourse, virtuous."¹⁷

Because these terms, incest and unchaste, inherently imply sexual contact between consenting adults, a broader definition is essential. In its proper context and in light of the current clinical understanding of incest, incest for purposes of this project will also include and incorporate the following terms in order to broaden the scope of its relevancy and meaning. Because incest is a recently

¹⁶William Morris (ed.) The American Heritage Dictionary of the English Language (Boston: American Heritage, 1975) p. 664.

¹⁷Ibid., p. 1394.

recognized and admitted problem, mental health professionals, and feminist researchers and therapists in particular, have found that the conventional and traditional definitions as found in the dictionary (Webster's and the American Heritage, etc.) are too limiting. And further, they have discovered that these traditional definitions do not address clearly what is truly involved in the incestuous act/event. This problem of definition can be found in the research literature of the 60s and 70s and will be addressed in greater detail in that section dealing with recent literature. In addition, feminist researchers and therapists are now beginning to demonstrate that events such as rape and incest are not just sexual acts but acts of violence which are assaultive in nature. Hence, we find in the recent writings of feminists dealing with incest new terms emerging such as "incestuous assault" and "sexually abusive behavior" as it relates to child molestation and incest. These new terms, as well as others, are addressed in the following definitions to help in the clarification of what is meant by the term incest.

The term molest is "to disturb, interfere with or annoy, inconvenience. To accost and harass sexually."¹⁸

Child Abuse is "any act or lack of action which puts a child's physical or emotional health and development in danger. Child abuse can take the form of physical abuse, sexual abuse, emotional abuse, emotional deprivation, physical neglect or inadequate supervision."¹⁹

¹⁸ Ibid., p. 845

¹⁹ Women's Rights (Sacramento: California Department of Justice, 1983) p. 41.

Incestuous Assault is "any manual or genital sexual contact or other explicit sexual behavior that an adult family member imposes on a child who is unable to alter or understand the adult's behavior because of his/her powerlessness in the family and early stage of psychological development."²⁰

Sexually abusive Behavior is that

sexual activity between an adult and a child, often progressing through the following spectrum of behaviors: nudity, disrobing, genital exposure, observation of the child, kissing, fondling, masturbation, fellatio, cunnilingus, digital penetration of the anus or rectal opening, penile penetration of the anus or rectal opening, digital penetration of vagina, penile penetration of the vagina, or dry intercourse.²¹

The term child is defined as any person under the age of eighteen.

In light of all the above terms, incest then is defined as follows: the non-consensual interaction of an adult by reason of his "authority and power to implicitly or directly coerce a child into sexual compliance."²²

The term power is defined as "the ability of persons or groups to impose their will on others despite resistance."²³ In addition, power is then "an enduring property which involves one's will on other people. It involves the ability to sanction or punish the person who resists the attempts to be controlled."²⁴

²⁰Sandra Butler, Conspiracy of Silence: The Trauma of Incest (San Francisco: Volcano Press, 1978) pp. 4-5.

²¹Sgroi, pp. 10-12.

²²Ibid., p. 9.

²³Murray A. Straus, Richard J. Gelles and Suzanne K. Steinmetz, Behind Closed Doors: Violence in the American Family (Garden City: Anchor Books, 1981) p. 192.

²⁴Ibid., p. 192.

When speaking of power one must speak of authority as well. For if one did not possess the authority to exercise their power then they would not be in the position of having power to impose their will on another. Authority then entails "a hierarchial chain of command and control."²⁵

Experts generally agree that when there is one dominant figure in the family, one that has the final decision-making power over family expenses, jobs, moves, living arrangements, leisure, etc., the chances are higher of child sexual abuse. The rate of this occurring is as a result of the power struggles between the spouses to either "legitimize their power or compensate for their lack of power."²⁶

This kind of legitimization or compensation is not limited to intrafamilial struggles, but can be as a result of the lack of control or power loss in the socio-economic structures of society.

In light of this, many social scientists believe that the dynamics of child sexual abuse "involve sexual expressions or acting out of non-sexual issues. Hence child sexual abuse is seen as a power issue and not a sexual one."²⁷

There is another concept of power that needs to be addressed in light of the thrust of this project. One way of interpreting the biblical understanding of power is to assume that the will is free and that we have the ability to make choices. Because our Christian traditions

²⁵Michelle Z. Rosaldo and Louise Lamphers (eds.) Women, Culture and Society (Stanford: Stanford University Press, 1983) p. 21.

²⁶Straus, Gelles, and Steinmetz, p. 195.

²⁷Ibid.

have usually assumed the natural superiority of the male over the female, the power of choice for the woman has more often than not been negated. This can be seen in the split between the spiritual/material and reason/emotion. Ruether, along with other feminist authors, have pointed to the fact that women have usually been equated with the material, the earthy things of life ruled by their emotions and passions while men have been taught that the search for the spiritual, transcending the material, is their true right. They are to be ruled by their powers of reason in order to keep their passions under control. This is clearly pointed out in the importance placed on celibacy. Women corrupt men and therefore must be controlled.²⁸ This concept of hierarchial structures will be discussed in further detail in Chapter 2 of this project.

The understanding of the biblical concept of power has a spiritual meaning undergirded by material well being. We are created in God's image, not to become a god but to be free, responsible beings, co-creating all that we are meant to be--this is the spiritual meaning of power. However, because of the patriarchal hierarchy that has been perpetuated since the beginning of time, the biblical essence of power for all has been corrupted, insofar as oppressed people, primarily women, are kept in a position of subservience.

There is more to the meaning of power than has been discussed, and that is ultimate power. For many persons the great questions of life are faith issues related to power. Is there a God? Why is there evil in the world? Where does life come from? As Christians our faith informs

²⁸ Rosemary Radford Ruether, New Woman New Earth: Sexist Ideologies and Human Liberation (New York: Seabury Press, 1983) p. 14.

us that there is a God, the Creator, Redeemer and Sustainer of the world. And further that while God bestows on us free will, the ability of discernment, and the power of free choice, God's own "prerogative remains uncompromised."²⁹

In light of this we can believe that God redeems good out of bad, power out of powerlessness; and healing out of alienation. God's reality transcends our reality and creates for us a new quality of life.

The term quality of life is defined as ...that which makes for a society that is just, participatory and sustainable...

The biblical conception of the quality of life is not limited to spiritual life nor is it hedonistic in nature. Rather, the spiritual and the material belong together. The spiritual life is the intrinsic good which ultimately defines the meaning of quality. Material existence is the instrumental good and makes it possible. Quality of life is ultimately a non-materialistic point of reference, but there can be no quality of life unless the material base is sufficient to sustain it.³⁰

The quality of life for the incest survivor has enormous implications. The reality out of which they define their quality of life is one of bankruptcy and fear--bankruptcy in the sense of personal power and self-esteem and fear of losing what little they have in the way of food, shelter and clothing. Oftentimes when a child does report incest they are the ones punished, taken out of the home and placed elsewhere. For the adult survivor, it often means leaving an abusive situation in their marriage and moving into a shelter. Women have been taught to settle for things. So many times adult incest survivors settle for the

²⁹S. V. McCasland, "Power," The Interpreter's Dictionary of the Bible (Nashville: Abingdon Press, 1962) III, pp. 855.

³⁰George B. Hartzog, III, "A National Parks Ministry: A Model for Ministry in the Context of Leisure Tourism" (unpublished D.Min. Project, School of Theology at Claremont, 1984) pp. 9-10.

security of a home that is abusive because they feel they are powerless to improve their quality of life. And for many this is true. When you are struggling for basic survival you do not have time to think of a better way of life.

By moving toward greater quality of life, one is responding to salvation, a gift of the grace of God. John Wesley in the eighteenth century articulated his understanding of salvation as that movement toward becoming a whole person. The definition of the Order of Salvation, as I understand it, is the process by which one receives the means of grace through repentance, is justified through faith and enters into the process of sanctification, the movement toward wholeness, the improvement of their quality of life.

A Review of Recent Literature and Research

The last twenty years has seen an onslaught of literature in the field of family violence. Until the 1960s the field of family violence and child sexual abuse in particular, had been left primarily to those involved in social work and charitable organizations.

It was not until Dr. Henry Kempe, a pediatrician in 1962 identified what he called the "battered child syndrome": broken bones or other evidence of physical trauma sometimes revealed by x-rays" that researchers and clinicians began to investigate at length the field of child abuse.³¹ With the introduction of the battered child syndrome ensued a very narrow definition of child abuse which has influenced

³¹Wini Breines and Linda Gordon, "The New Scholarship in Family Violence," Signs (Spring 1983) p. 493.

research in the 60s and 70s. It was not until the advent of the women's movement in the late 70s and early 80s that we began to see a broadening of the scope of child sexual abuse.

Research in the 60s was written primarily by and for professionals in the medical and mental health communities. The medical community confined their research to citing statistics to uncover how prevalent a phenomenon this was. Likewise the writing in the mental health community was concerned with citing statistics and making estimates as to the prevalence of the problem. As a result of their investigations, these researchers used as their model for determining the causes of child abuse the psychopathological model. Researchers using this model (Spinetta, Rigler, Steele and Pollank) discounted any social forces involved in the problem and attributed the causes of child abuse to character and/or personality disorders in the battering parents.³²

While the 60s found people focusing their attention on formulating statistics and gathering clinical data on the psychopathology of the dynamics, the 70s found researchers looking at the social causes of child abuse. Three factors emerged during the 70s that have been credited with turning the focus from psychopathological frame to a more sociological frame. First, Americans became aware of violence and its impact on families as a result of the Vietnam War; second, the emergence of the women's movement; and third, the decline of the consensus model of society and the introduction of the conflict or social actions model.³³

³²Richard J. Gelles, "Violence in the Family: A Review of Research in the Seventies," Journal of Marriage and the Family (November 1980) 873-874.

³³Ibid., p. 874.

Due to the above factors, an effort was made to define and separate out violence and abuse, thereby doing away with the narrow definition employed in the 60s as a result of the "battered child syndrome."

Defining abuse and violence created confusion as researchers began dealing with the issues of child abuse, wife abuse and family violence. The confusion arose because the terms violence and abuse are not equivalent. In other words, violence was defined as any physical aggression while abuse was defined as a subset of behaviors or action resulting in physical injury. Debates ensued over what was acceptable and unacceptable violence. For instance, is spanking violent or non-violent and is it acceptable for a husband to hit or shove his wife? While these definitions are still prevalent in the clinical community, feminist researchers expanded the definition of abuse to include non-violent behaviors. These behaviors include such things as neglect and malnourishment. They also broadened the definition of violence to include the phrase "any act carried out with the intention, or perceived intention of physically hurting another person."³⁴

The 70s also found researchers coming up with operational definitions of abuse and violence. The problem with the research here is that those that were interviewed were those children seen in hospitals and reported with injuries as defined by the "battered child syndrome." Researchers in the late 70s found that doctors had a greater tendency to report and define abuse in lower socio-economic class children than

³⁴Ibid., p. 875.

they did in middle to upper middle class cases.

In addition to establishing accurate statistics of the incidence of family violence, researchers were involved with identifying "the factors associated with the various types of violence."³⁵ They determined that there were at least four main factors:

- 1) the cycle of violence in a family was repeated between generations;
- 2) that the socio-economic status of a family depends on the probability of violence occurring in that family;
- 3) stressful situations such as unemployment or part-time work contributed to the amount of violence in the family;
- 4) social isolation³⁶

Researchers also began developing several theories about why abuse occurs in families. The first, "The Resource Theory," purported that parents who had not developed adequate parental resources to cope with children were more likely to abuse their children. Secondly, "The General Systems Theory" purported that family violence was indicative of the family system and not individual pathology. Thirdly, "The Ecological Theory" focused on the overlapping set of systems and cultural environments in which human development occurs. Fourth, was the "Evolutionary Theory" purporting the idea of parental investment. Proponents of this theory believed that parental bonding or the lack of bonding, such as found often in step-parenting, increases the chance of child abuse. Lastly, the "Patriarch and Wife Abuse Theory" as suggested by feminist writers purports the idea of social and economic oppression

³⁵Ibid., p. 876.

³⁶Ibid., pp. 878-879.

throughout the centuries has perpetuated the patriarchal structure of society thereby trapping women in an inferior position, subjected to the oppressive hands of their husbands.³⁷

Research in the 80s is continuing much in the same vein as the late 70s. Much of the literature being written today is being done by feminist therapists. Instead of using strictly clinical data as their base for information they are turning to the victims, listening to their stories and taking their experience as a means of doing therapy. These writers are looking at history to discern the myths that have perpetuated the blame of the victim and have released the abuser.

While much has been done in the field, research and statistics are yet scanty if not incomplete. The taboo of the "secret" that the woman has been forced to carry with her is being lifted enabling us to get a clearer picture of the true numbers of victims and of the devastation of sexual abuse.

For purposes of this project, I have chosen to use the writings of feminist authors because, in my opinion, they represent the most effective means of integrating psychological and theological insights in order to develop a new reality for victims of child incest.

The authors chosen are clinicians, theologians and pastoral counselors with extensive experience in working with women. The clinicians I have chosen are Suzanne Sgroi, M.D. (Dr. Sgroi is currently serving as codirector of the St. Joseph College Institute for the Treatment and Control of Child Sexual Abuse), Judith Herman, M.D.

³⁷Ibid., pp. 880-882.

(Psychiatric Director of the Women's Mental Health Collective in Somerville, Mass.), Joan Robbins and Rachel Siegal (both are feminist therapists in private practice), Florence Rush, psychiatric social worker and Sandra Butler. Feminist theologians such as Ruether, Florenza and ethicists and educators and pastoral counselors such as Harrison, Gilligan and Fortune have been drawn upon to help in the exploration of a new reality for women in which the redemption of women's lives can be real. I have used John Wesley's own sermons as a primary source for building the framework and defining the method that helps both survivor and pastoral counselor transcend the traditional and oppressive realities that has entrapped, blamed, subjugated and punished women.

Together, these authors have provided the impetus for my thinking, understanding and construction of what is available to counselor and survivor through the means of dialog between feminist therapy, theology and Wesley's understanding of the Order of Salvation.

The literature I have chosen is by no means exhaustive of the available literature, but rather it is representative of the work currently being done by feminists in the field of child sexual abuse.

The Project Outline

In the second chapter, the problem of incest will be examined historically with special attention being given to the impact of biblical and cultural influences. The problem of family violence can no longer be ignored, pushed aside or erased. It has been said that family violence has reached epidemic proportions crossing all lines of

class, race and nationality. Family violence no longer is just the ill of those on the wrong side of the tracks but has found its way into white, upper middle-class churches. No longer does one have to make a trip to the prisons in order to find out about family violence: our pews will provide the same information. As responsible persons called into participation in the Kingdom of God we must look at how we are informed and what informs us as Christians. To understand our illness (for family violence and incest are not individual ills, but the illness of the collective community), we must know our history. We must also know our cultural inheritance in order to make the Kingdom of God a reality for all.

Our biblical and cultural inheritances are passed on from generation to generation through story. Chapter 3 is the story of an incest survivor and her family. In addition, it includes a clinical examination of the dynamics of her story in order to inform us of the patterns of behavior indicative of an incestuous family.

Treatment of incest will be examined in Chapter 4. The history of treatment for the incest survivor is a relatively recent phenomenon beginning in the early 60s. With the advent of the women's movement and feminist therapy in the 70s we find a significant amount of work being done. A's story will first be looked at clinically in light of feminist research and treatment and secondly in light of theological insights from Wesley's Order of Salvation in dialog with feminist therapy.

Treatment for the survivor, understanding the family dynamics and patterns, being in dialog with the clinical community are all essential elements in the healing of the individual. However, even this

is not enough. Until we begin as a society to look at how we perpetuate this crime, incest will continue to haunt us.

Theological Fields of Study

"Sexual violence as a topic for ethical (and theological) discourse among Christians has gone unaddressed" says Marie Fortune.³⁸ She continues to say that:

There are many complex reasons for this. One reason certainly is the silence on the topic by society as a whole. Ethicists (theologians) and pastors, like judges, doctors, police officers, and the general public, have given little attention to the problem of sexual violence. Specifically in the Christian community, rape and child sexual abuse have been largely overlooked by most ethicists (and theologians) who have shaped traditions and contemporary ethical discussion.³⁹

The time has come when the church can no longer remain silent on sexual violence. As more and more women become empowered to tell their stories we find those stories are told by women sitting in the pews of our local churches. As an institution, the church has at its disposal the power to change attitudes, provide services, and promote healing to the broken lives of women. As the people of God, we are called to be in ministry to one another.

As responsible Christians we are compelled to articulate the grace of God through the active ministry of redemption. For victims of sexual violence the church has been the last place for them to turn. Instead of hearing the good news, women have heard that they deserve what they get, that their sole purpose is to be submissive, loving

³⁸ Fortune, Sexual Violence, p. 42.

³⁹ Ibid.

wives or daughters. Instead of taking sexism seriously the church has remained virtually silent. Instead of providing alternative ways of interpreting scripture, the church in many instances has substituted new language for old biblical directives supporting and maintaining the hierarchial structures of the powerful over the powerless.

Most people would agree with the idea that a person's experience shapes her or his understanding of reality. As pastoral counselors, we have the opportunity to change their experience by creating with them a new reality that transcends their broken and alienated reality created by their abuse, misinformation and oppression. This project will advance this idea by integrating both theological and clinical realities through the means of dialog with each other, thereby shaping an overarching reality that is redemptive for everyone, and in particular for the incest survivor. While other areas of theological study will be a part of this project such as biblical studies, church history, world religions, ethics and worship, the dialog between theology and psychology will be used to develop an understanding of how we can bring about the good news of God's salvific action in the lives of incest survivors.⁴⁰

In preparing for this project I have read extensively in the field of sexual violence, in particular incest, as well as having served in a psychiatric hospital, pastoral counseling center, and in the local pastorate counseling women.

⁴⁰Hartzog, pp. 26-27.

A Beginning Word

Incest conjures up for many of us many different images--the dirty old man, the pervert on the street corner. It also has the power to turn our insides inside out with disgust. Almost everyone agrees that it is a taboo and because it is a taboo, it is rarely spoken of because we all know that it should not happen. The fact is however, that incest does happen. And that as a community of faith, the people of God we are called to get involved with the broken. As more and more the issue of incest confronts us, we are confronted with the myths that have protected us from having to face our own attitudes and beliefs that have kept this one of the "best kept secrets." But in the midst of this bad news, there is good news, the news that as pastoral counselors we offer the means of grace to the broken and alienated in our midst.

As pastoral counselors we have at our disposal the tools by which we can reinterpret, redefine, and restructure reality, through the means of grace. Unlike clinical practitioners we draw from the Scriptures, the good news of salvation. And that this salvation is brought to people through scriptural reinterpretation, prayer, confession, justification, sanctification, the sacraments, and faith development.

Chapter 2

THE PROBLEM OF INCEST

Historical and Cultural Perspectives

Religion is simultaneously mystery and meaning, religion asks the great questions of life and purports to know their answers: Why do we exist? How did life begin? What is God like? What does God expect of us? These are issues to which the other institutions of society relate.

On the answers to these questions depend both the ethics of our interpersonal relationships and the nature of our institutions. Religion names God, but religion names us as well.¹

The religious myths of people are crucial to people's understandings of themselves, their roles and how they relate to one another.

Religion as John Hutchinson has pointed out is

an existent system of holy forms. These forms are patterns or structures of human attitudes, beliefs or practices, they are organized or structured ways of thinking, feeling or doing. Religion is an attitude of faith or ultimate concern.²

It is the religious myths of cultures that have woven the moral and ethical fabric of contemporary sexism today. It has named for us our positions in the world and it has provided the framework out of which women have remained inferior to men throughout the centuries.³ "Our cultures have brought to fruition our faiths and beliefs, for our cultures are our lived out faith and religion."⁴

¹Joan Chittister, "Divinely Ordained? The Religious Doctrine of Female Inferiority," Sojourners (November 1984) 16.

²John A. Hutchinson, Paths of Faith (New York: McGraw-Hill, 1975) p. 5.

³Chittister, pp. 16-17.

⁴Hutchinson, p. 6.

Historical writings record religious myths in such a way that the subordination of women has been continually perpetuated. This fact is illustrated by numerous feminist theologians, most notably Rosemary Ruether and Mary Daly. Only since the 1960s have women begun asking questions about the origins of their subordination to men. To reconstruct women's history has just now only begun. Such theologians as Daly, Fiorenza, Ruether, Russell, and Tribble have brought to light that significant numbers of historians have assumed the authority and superiority of men, never questioning who ordained them superior. The very early concept of a matriarchy, according to Ruether, has virtually vanished from the pages of history. Instead what we have inherited are religious writings of men, structured to ensure that they are given their full and due respect through the obedient, and submissive position of women.

Religions from around the world, although they acknowledge a feminine side to them, have come down through the ages translated in a hierarchial structure of what is to be valued. They have arrived and been sustained on lofty principles of moral and ethical behavior, but nonetheless they have still relegated women as inferior beings. Many theologians argue this is simply not so, but a closer look at how religions have, either implicitly or explicitly, relegated women into inferior positions informs us today that there is much validity to our concern.

Rosemary Ruether in her book New Woman New Earth questions how the hierarchal structure came into being. She begins by dividing her inquiry into three main developmental categories: 1) The Conquest of the Mother; 2) The Negative of the Mother; and 3) the Sublimation

of the Mother. She begins by addressing the two critical turning points in the socio-economic history of women.

The first transition is from tribal village to urban life.

"With this transition came a new elite group of males where power was no longer based on the physical powers of the hunter or warrior but on the inherited monopoly of political power and knowledge."⁵

Second, was the development of man's industrialization which differs from urbanization over more and more of the world and shifts economic production increasingly from the family to a work place separated from the home. Women, she says, "once the center of productive economic life, became more and more marginalized, as the place of the home shrank to its present proportions of a purely consumer and child raising unit."⁶

The "Achilles heel of human civilization" she claims, resides in the false development of maleness through the repression of the female.

The importance of woman in a family central economic, the centrality of the mother as life giver of every child, makes woman the symbol of nature. This symbolic role of women is gradually repressed... by a male elite, who begins to rationalize an artificial debilitation of women in more developed social organization, and who begin to feel themselves the masters, rather than the children of organic nature.⁷

An example of this kind of sublimation can be found in early Hinduism. Goddesses were numerous and bountiful in the origins of Hinduism. One of the most powerful and influential of them was Mother

⁵ Rosemary Radford Ruether, New Woman New Earth: Sexist Ideologies and Human Liberation (New York: Seabury Press, 1983) p. 6.

⁶ Ibid., pp. 6-9.

⁷ Ibid., p. 11.

Earth. Her power lie in her fertility, her ability to give life, to bring forth energy and matter. However, her power posed a danger to developing Hinduism and needed to be controlled. The conclusion therefore, "was that female fertility was ineffective unless practiced in conjunction with Father Heaven, whose spirit would fertilize the earth and bring order to the undisciplined Semine Principle."⁸ This kind of hierarchal structure--Father Heaven above Mother Earth below, fertilizing, controlling direction, and tempering the feminine--is not an uncommon theme in religious thinking and cultural development.

The term hierarchy is defined from the Greek words meaning "holy order." Religion then can be defined "as an existent system of holy forms (and) these forms are patterns or structures of human attitudes, beliefs, or practices; they are organized or structural ways of thinking; feeling; or doing."⁹ In light of the way hierarchy has been defined we can see the importance attached to it and how the early beginnings of dualistic thinking throughout the centuries split--spirit/matter and male/female. Feminist theologians are beginning to question, however, the validity of such a definition and are suggesting that such splits are not indicative of the true meaning. Rather they are suggesting that to split or to elevate spirit over matter or male over female is in direct contradiction of God's created order.

Joan Chittister points out how this dualistic way of thinking affected women. She says that by the time of the Buddha (500 B.C.)

⁸ Chittister, p. 16.

⁹ Hutchinson, p. 5.

much of the religious awe surrounding women because of their life-giving power was lost resulting in such changes as the marriage age being lowered to five years and educational opportunities becoming more scarce. She concludes that as a result feminine energy and creativity were completely under control of male influence and dominance.¹⁰

She continues to say that:

...Centuries of this theology had made it perfectly to the traditional Hindu that no woman of any caste could gain salvation unless and until she had first been reborn as a man, a state that could be merited only by having been a good wife and bearing male children. In fact, even after his death, a husband controlled his wife: she could not remarry; she was to do penance ever after for having caused his death by virtue of her own bad karma; she was even expected to throw herself on his funeral pyre if her love for him was total, since without him she was nothing anyway.¹¹

When the new feelings of Buddha came into being the states of women improved somewhat with the feeling that nirvana was "within reach of anyone...who was willing to live out the Four Noble Truths" and the Noble Eightfold Path.¹²

While the Four Noble Truths and the Noble Eightfold Path purported equality, salvation, and justice for females it remained that spirituality was still more important thereby perpetuating the hierarchal structure of maleness over femaleness. And further it was believed that the concept of celibacy was the pursuit of purity. As a result, Monastic Orders became the symbol of nobility. Even though women, it was thought, could be candidates for enlightenment, they were rigidly scrutinized before

¹⁰Chittister, p. 16.

¹¹Ibid.

¹²Ibid.

before they could enter the monastery. And once admitted to the Monastery they were to be obedient to the instructions of the Monks.

Chinese religion, Confusianism in particular, held the family in high regard! In fact, the family was held together through loyalty and reverence for one's father. The ethical and moral thinking that structured their understanding came from an essay entitled "Great Learning." It is devoted to the Confucian ideal of self-cultivation or self-realization by means of study, or what the text calls the "investigation of things."¹³

As the "Great Learning" asserts:

The extension of knowledge lay in the investigation of things. For only when things are investigated is knowledge extended; and when knowledge is extended are thoughts sincere; only when thoughts are sincere are minds rectified; only when minds are rectified are our persons cultivated; only when our persons are cultivated are our families regulated; only when families are regulated are states well governed; and only when states are well governed is there peace in the world.¹⁴

As can be seen through this teaching the implicit subjugation of women continues.

Another teaching which persists today, that purports integration and equality for women, is the Taoists understanding of Yin and Yang. The "Tao" meaning "the way" of "the path" was dualistic in nature. The Taoists refer to this as Yin, the passive female principle and Yang, the active male principle. Together these two dual energy forces constitute all things in nature and society.¹⁵

Thus the dualistic hierarchal structure is simply perpetuated

¹³Hutchinson, p. 235.

¹⁴Ibid.

¹⁵Ibid., p. 214.

only reframed from the original thinking Buddhist teachings. Example of the Yang and Yin are as follows:

Heaven was Yang and the Earth Yin--the male active, the female passive. The sun was Yang and the moon was Yin. Yang was bright (light) and Yin darkness; hence the bright sunlight of the day was Yang, while the dark, shadowed side was Yin. Yang represents an unbroken line, while Yin represents a broken line.¹⁶

According to Chittister little has been done by the Taoists and Confucians to promote the equality of women. Rather they have simply brought together their respective teachings and the oppressive structures of Hinduism and Buddhism.

Kathleen Ryan's writing on the nature and purpose of hierarchal strategy says that:

Hierarchal thinking always assigns greater value to that which is higher. A hierarchy is a pyramial of dominance and states. Its function is to legitimize power while ignoring that power corrupts and that justice becomes an unattainable ideal. Women and the earth are treated as the other, subordinate and inferior...Woman and nature tempt man...¹⁷

In assessing the elements of these religions we can begin to see the implications of a hierarchal system for women. Similarly, Greek and Roman philosophers have structured their moral and ethical constructs of society on a hierarchal, patriarchal system that traps women in inherent powerless positions.

Aristotle writing in the fourth century B.C. on the role of men and women in Athens society says that:

¹⁶Ibid., pp. 214-215.

¹⁷Kathleen Ryan, "Woman and Nature Under Christianity or How Hierarchies Distort" Handout "Victims of Violence and the Religious Community" Orange, California, June 1984.

...the male is by nature superior, and the female inferior; and the one rules and the other is ruled; this principle of necessity, extends to all mankind...the inequality is permanent. Hence the ruler ought to have moral virtue in perfection, for his duty is that of a master artificer and the master artificer is reason; the subjects, on the other hand, require only that measure of virtue which is proper to each of them. Clearly then, moral virtue belongs to all of them; but the temperance of a man and of a woman, or the courage and justice of a man and of a woman, are not, as Socrates maintained, the same; the courage of a man is shown in community; of a woman in obeying...All classes must be deemed to have their special attributes; as the poet says of women, "Silence is a woman's glory," but this is not equally the glory of a man. The child is imperfect, and therefore obviously his virtue is not relative to himself alone, but to the perfect man and to his teacher...¹⁸

As is evidenced by Aristotle's explication on roles we see here that the oppressive subjugation of women within the hierarchal structure of patrician is cloaked in the noble gesture of responsibility. If, however, we look beyond this noble gesture we can discern the real implications. Hierarchy, in general, and patriarchal hierarchy in particular, has been perpetuated in order to protect the dominant class from those that they rule. The male is taught that his virtue is to rule and teach, the virtue of the woman is to be obedient, and the virtue of the child is to be respectful to the teacher. Both the woman and child relate to the man as the master, as a slave would relate to his or her master. In fact, the life of the woman was not much different than the slave--slaves being property bought and sold for purposes of their usefulness. Another female virtue is that of loyalty.

Sophocles writing in the fifth century B.C. on the life of women in Athens tells about Procne's thoughts after her husband had

¹⁸ Mary R. Lefkowitz and Maureen B. Fant, Women's Life in Greece and Rome: A Source Book in Translation (Baltimore: Johns Hopkins University Press, 1982) pp. 63-64.

seduced her sister:

But now outside my father's house, I am nothing, yes, often I have looked on women's nature in this regard, that we are nothing... when we reach puberty and can understand, we are thrust out and sold away from our ancestral gods and from our parents. Some go to strange men's homes, others to foreigners...some to joyless houses, some to hostile. And all this once the first night has yoked us to our husband, we are forced to praise and to say that all is well.¹⁹

Loyalty to husband would appear to have been the highest excellence a woman could attain. In first century A.D. Rome this kind of virtue is told in the story of Tertia Aemilia, the wife of Scipio Africanus:

...was a woman of such kindness and patience that although she knew that her husband was carrying on with a little serving girl, she looked the other way, (as she thought it unseemly for) a woman to prosecute her great husband...²⁰

In the classical stage of civilization men entertained the possibility of freeing themselves from depending on nature altogether thereby negating the mother. This connection between nature and the mother, and the consequent demeaning of women, is developed by Ruether:

Maleness is identified with intellectuality and spirituality; femaleness is identified with the lower maternal nature. Aristotle systematically develops this view of women as the type of the naturally servile person vis-a-vis free Greek males...free Greek males represent the ruling "reason" which must subjugate the body people, represented by women and slaves.²¹

Theoretical Perspectives

It has long been recognized that the incest taboo is universal

¹⁹Ibid., p. 17.

²⁰Ibid., p. 145.

²¹Ruether, p. 14.

to human culture. While there is no solid common definition of incest among the cultures of the world, what is common to most cultures "is the seriousness with which the taboo is regarded."²² Judith Herman in her book Father-Daughter Incest elaborates on the three main theories of the incest taboo--the biological, the psychological, and the social.

The reports that the biological theory "explains the fundamental purpose of the taboo as the prevention of inbreeding."²³ She concludes that persons following this theory claim that the reason is strictly to prohibit "sexual intercourse between fertile blood relatives, and its function is to regulate reproduction."²⁴ The problem with this theory says Herman is "its failure to explain the prohibition of sexual expression other than intercourse and the elaboration of the incest taboo outside the nuclear family."²⁵ The other problem cited by Herman is the theories' failure to explain why the barrier to father-daughter matings might be weaker than mother-son matings. To this she reasons that

It is the operation of the incest barrier (in biological law) through the institutions of male dominance and the sexual division of labor, institutions that are widespread...in human society, which determines the relative weakness of the barrier against father-daughter matings.²⁶

The second major theory she reports on is the psychological theory. In this theory the taboo is conceived as "a rule governing all

²²Judith L. Herman, Father-Daughter Incest (Cambridge: Harvard University Press, 1981) p. 50.

²³Ibid., p. 51.

²⁴Ibid.

²⁵Ibid., pp. 51-52.

²⁶Ibid., p. 53.

forms of sexual expression, not merely sexual intercourse within the family."²⁷ The purpose she reports is to "establish the necessary conditions for family life: to regulate sexual conflicts and rivalries, to secure an appropriate environment for the socialization of children and ultimately to ensure the dissolution of the nuclear family and the formation of new families."²⁸ The primary problem with this theory says Herman like the biological theory is that it fails to explain the "extensive development of incest taboo outside the nuclear family."²⁹

An early proponent of this theory was Sigmund Freud. He proposed the purpose of the taboo as that being to control male sexual rivalry and promote peace within the family. The actual emergence of Freud's theory has recently been called into question by Florence Rush. Freud first came across the problem of sexual abuse when beginning to treat women suffering from hysteria. Rush notes: "Since his hysterical patients repeatedly reported sexual abuse, most often naming their fathers as the abusers, in his early theorizing, he drew a casual connection between sexual abuse and neurosis caused by sexual abuse."³⁰ As more and more of his patients claimed sexual abuse by their fathers, however, Freud began to feel uncomfortable with their accusations and later renounced their experiences as fantasy. However, prior to this renunciation Freud

²⁷Ibid.

²⁸Ibid., p. 54.

²⁹Ibid.

³⁰Florence Rush, The Best Kept Secret: Sexual Abuse of Children (New York: McGraw-Hill, 1980) pp. 82-83.

presented a series of papers entitled "The Aetiology of Hysteria" where he named "social rather than biological causes of neurosis. He identified the specific excitement of the genitals resulting from sexual abuse in childhood is the trauma that brought on hysteria..."³¹ Freud presented his theory in its complete form until case histories began to appear in direct opposition to the understood medical opinion of his day. In private correspondence with a friend, he even went so far as to say that "the seduction by fathers was the essential point in cases of hysteria."³²

It wasn't until Freud began dealing with his feelings surrounding the death of his father that he abandoned his seduction theory in favor of his Oedipus theory. In developing his Oedipus theory Freud held to his own experiences in his therapy after the death of his father applying them across the board to women. With this development of penis envy, Freud concluded that little girls' fantasies of being seduced by their fathers represented "an actual biological need to make up for her natural deficiency forever being penisless."³³

Florence Rush, commenting further on this development, says that:

Freud found that the incestuous wish of little girls for their fathers was a predisposition into traumas prior rise to excitation and fixation. As the child was biologically ready, any external stimulation such as masturbation, sex play with other children, a dream, or a wish could trigger the seduction fantasy, or the wish for the penis.³⁴

³¹Ibid., p. 87.

³²Ibid., p. 88.

³³Ibid., p. 95.

³⁴Ibid.

As is evidenced by Freud's turn around we can clearly see that he made the seduction theory an invention of women, discounting it as fact and thereby incriminating daughters instead of fathers as the abusers.

To support his theory, Freud went so far as to change the names of fathers so as to implicate others instead. While he later admitted this in his private correspondence, he nonetheless clung tenaciously to his own experience, insights, and theories emerging from his self-analysis. This was taken as proof of his accuracy regarding his Oedipus theory.³⁵

Freud set the stage for later developmental theories regarding the sexually abused child. Switching from a cultural to a biological explanation, he, in essence, dismissed the importance of what his patients were telling him and gave carte blanche authority to the biases of his times.

So strong and convincing was Freud's theory that later students of his also adopted his Oedipus theory. Karl Abraham, one of Freud's earliest students, expounded on Freud's theory saying that "since not all little girls are molested there must be something wrong with those who are. The abused child, he assures us, was preinclined toward her own violation."³⁶ He goes on to say that "Sexual assault could not be regarded as the cause of the disease...As a child she yields to the trauma...and already has a disposition to neurosis or psychosis in later life."³⁷

³⁵Ibid., pp. 95-96.

³⁶Ibid., p. 96.

³⁷Ibid.

This kind of analysis led to the conclusion that little girls are responsible for their own abuse, and it set the stage for treatment techniques of sexually abused children for years. In fact, it was not until the 1960s and 1970s that this kind of thinking was being called into question by such writers as Juliet Mitchell, Nancy Chodow, Carol Gilligan, and Jean Baker Miller. These and other feminist authors call into question Freud's biases in developing his Oedipus theory. They go about this by calling attention to the "psychological consequences of the sexual division of labor in child care."³⁸

One of their objections is that the cultural mind set of Freud's time was the patriarchal structure of society. And that because of this structure there are profound sex differences "created by the fact mothers, and not fathers, nurture children."³⁹ Judith Herman goes on in summarizing this objection by saying that:

The rearing of children by subordinate females ensures that boys and girls will differ in almost every aspect of personality development, including the formation of gender identity, the acquisition of conscience, the growth of the capacity to nurture, and the internalization of the incest taboo. The result is the reproduction of a male psychology of domination and a female psychology of victimization.⁴⁰

The result of all this says Herman is that "the successful attainment of conventional adult heterosexuality requires an incomplete resolution of the female Oedipus complex and a channeling of female sexuality into submissive relationships with older, stronger, richer,

³⁸Herman, p. 55.

³⁹Ibid., p. 55.

⁴⁰Ibid.

more powerful men."⁴¹ Phyllis Chesler states the same point more bluntly by saying that:

Women are encouraged to commit incest as a way of life...As opposed to marrying our fathers, we marry men like our fathers...men who are older than us, have more money than us, more power than us...our fathers.⁴²

Female socialization under patriarchy and Freud's Oedipus theory have, in my opinion, perpetuated the myths of incest being a child's fantasy rather than an adult's behavior, the special daughter theory, the affection theory and that fathers have rights of ownership over their children. Each of these myths have in their own way relegated women to inferior positions, devalued their personal development, turned them into possessions to be used and abused at will, have kept their personhood within a web of deceit, and has perpetuated violence upon them as an acceptable way of life. Like the biological theory, the psychological theory too fails to account for the extensive development of incest between fathers and daughters.

The third theory regarding incest taboo is best described in terms of social law, those laws regulating marriage. This theory appears to be identical with the law of exogamy "which requires marriage outside the family alone, but of kinship relations among families."⁴³ Herman concludes that "by preventing marriage within the family group, the incest taboo interferes with this group's natural tendency to isolate itself."⁴⁴ Isolation, one of the most common components of an incestuous

⁴¹Ibid., p. 57.

⁴²Ibid., pp. 57-58.

⁴³Ibid., p. 59.

⁴⁴Ibid.

family can best be deterred and prevented when understood and dealt with through the social law theory. The social law is best understood if seen in the context of what Levi-Straus calls the "role of gift," that is, the giving of oneself to another.

If seen in the context, the role of gift is then carried out by a cooperative social life among families. And within this cooperative social life there are created special relationships because of the exchange of gifts. (And further) "This exchange results in the formation of special relationships of trust and mutual aid. The exchange of people in marriage, the most serious and lasting kind of gift-giving, is governed by the rule of exogamy on the incest taboo."⁴⁵

The problem with this theory is that it does not take into account that the objects of exchange are usually women and that those usually exchanging women are men. Hence, the father of the bride gives the bride away into the waiting arms of her husband. Herman points out, further elucidating this point, by saying that:

The asymmetry in the incest taboo thus results not from any abstract requirement of gift-giving, but from the fact that the givers and receivers are men, and the gifts are women. Wherever women are considered the property of men, the incest taboo becomes a rule governing their exchange. Since the rule is made and enforced by men, without the active participation of women and children, it expresses the predominant interests of men alone, not the interest of the social group as a whole.⁴⁶

As has been outlined in earlier sections of this project, the rights of ownership of women in the family rest with the fathers. Nowhere is this more clearly seen than in the Biblical injunctions

⁴⁵ Ibid., p. 60.

⁴⁶ Ibid., p. 60.

Thou shalt not uncover the nakedness of thy daughter-in-law: she is thy son's wife; thou shalt not uncover her nakedness.

Thou shalt not uncover the nakedness of thy brother's wife; it is thy brother's nakedness.

Thou shalt not uncover the nakedness of a woman and her daughter, neither shalt thou take her son's daughter, or her daughter's daughter, to uncover her nakedness, for they are her near kinswomen, it is nakedness.

Neither shalt thou take a wife to her sister, to vex her, to uncover her nakedness, beside the other in her life time.⁴⁷

Just like the biological and psychological theories, the social law theory of the incest taboo falls short in accounting for the relative silence regarding the extensive development of incest between fathers and daughters.

In summing up the three theories it can be said that the incest taboo can be abstractly understood in this fashion: "The biological law which prevents inbreeding, as a psychological law which creates the family, and as a social law which creates kinship, or as the sum of all these."⁴⁸ While certainly different in their contexts what these three theories share in common are: none of them explains the widespread discrepancy in the behavior of mothers and fathers toward their children, none of them adequately address the cultural context and societal structures out of which they are developed, and lastly none of them address the relative silence or acceptance of father daughter incest.

In light of the inherent weaknesses in each of these theories several conclusions can be drawn. First, they make the natural

⁴⁷Herman, p. 62.

⁴⁸Ibid.

unquestioned assumption of male supremacy; second, incest laws are written in such a way as to support the myth of male ownership, or property rights of men over women; third, male psychological development is seen as more important than women's in that individuation and autonomy are healthy attributes for men, care, nurture and dependency are expected for women; and fourth, the continued division in the labor, social and economic structure of family and corporate life. In the end, what we see is the continuation of male supremacy and a patriarchal structure of society.

In summing up the impact of the inadequacies in dealing with existing theories of incest on survivors Herman writes:

Whereas male supremacy creates the social conditions that favor the development of father-daughter incest, the sexual division of labor creates the psychological conditions that lead to the same result. Male supremacy invests fathers with immense powers over their children, especially their daughters. The sexual division of labor, in which women nurture children and men do not, produce fathers who are pre-disposed to use their powers exploitatively. The rearing of children by subordinate women ensures the reproduction in each generation of the psychology of male supremacy. It produces sexually aggressive men with little capacity to nurture, nurturant women with undeveloped sexual capacities, and children of both sexes who stand in awe of the power of fathers. Wherever these conditions obtain, father-daughter incest is likely to be a common occurrence. In any culture, the greater the degree of male supremacy and the more rigid the sexual divisions of labor, the more frequently one might expect the taboo on father-daughter incest to be violated.⁴⁹

⁴⁹ Ibid.

regarding incest. In addition it has previously been pointed out that incestuous involvements between father and daughter while not condoned are easily overlooked as long as he gives her away in marriage. The only valid reason given for him not to have incestuous relations with his daughters is not so much because it is a personal affront to them but would result in their devaluation in the marriage dowry.

The Biblical law is quite clear regarding incest laws and is clearly addressed to men presupposing and assuming that men indeed are the givers and receivers of women. The Biblical law as outlined in Leviticus 18 clearly articulates the social law theory in that it names every conceivable kind of incest except that between father/daughter!

None of you shall approach to any that is near of kin to him, to uncover their nakedness: I am the Lord.

The nakedness of thy father, is the nakedness of thy mother, shalt those not uncover: she is thy mother; thou shalt not uncover her nakedness.

The nakedness of the father's wife shalt thou not uncover: it is thy father's nakedness.

The nakedness of thy sister, the daughter of thy father, or daughter of thy mother, whether she be born at home, or born abroad, even their nakedness thou shalt not uncover.

The nakedness of thy son's daughter, or of thy daughter's daughter, even their nakedness thou shalt not uncover: for theirs is thine own nakedness.

The nakedness of thy father's wife's daughter, begotten of thy father, she is thy sister, thou shalt not uncover her nakedness.

Thou shalt not uncover the nakedness of thy father; sister; she is thy father's near kinswoman.

Thou shalt not uncover the nakedness of thy mother's sister for she is thy mother's near kinswoman.

Thou shalt not uncover the nakedness of thy father's brother, thou shalt not approach to his wife: she is thine aunt.

Chapter 3

FATHER DAUGHTER INCEST

The Story of A.Identifying Data:

A. is a 34-year old white female. She has been married thirteen years and has one daughter. A. was born and raised in New York City. She and her husband T. and daughter have lived in Southern California for the last seven years. She is currently unemployed. Her parents divorced about thirteen years ago. Her father has since moved to Southern California while her mother remains in New York City.

Presenting Appearance:

A. is oriented to time, place and date and can give an accurate history of her life events. Her affect is flat, her mood labile. Her relational attitude is that of being clingy until someone hurts her, doesn't understand her, or doesn't any longer care about her. She is short and stocky. Her dress is polyester, mix and match, not all the time matching. Her appearance is neat and clean on her good days, disheveled and unkempt on her bad days. Her gate is that of a shuffle, aimlessly maneuvering herself from place to place. On occasion she does walk with a bounce, usually when she first meets someone who likes her and hasn't done anything to hurt her (i.e., confront her about anything).

Presenting Problem:

A. presented as depressed and feeling suicidal. She claimed that she could no longer live with her husband's jealousy. She felt trapped, alone, lonely and isolated--"I am just going crazy." She came to the hospital after an unsuccessful suicide attempt and became so depressed she could no longer get out of bed and begin the day. She was also sexually dysfunctional which aggravated her husband and made him accuse her of "getting it elsewhere."

Significant Others:

A. is very dependent on her husband and daughter. She has tried to reincorporate her father into her life but he has remarried and no longer has time for her or her daughter which angers A. considerably because of his previous involvement and support--both financially and materially. A. does not get along with her mother who remains in New York although her mother has tried to reestablish contact with A. A. has no outside support group, friends or working acquaintances, although she is now part of a CETA training program as well as daytime therapy group.

Work History:

A. has a long work history consisting mainly of jobs as dishwasher, janitor, cook and housekeeper. She has not been able to keep a job for longer than five months. She reports the reason for this as being because of her husband's jealousy of her being out of the house.

Counseling History:

A. has a history of multiple hospitalizations. Her first hospitalization at age seventeen in New York was for a nervous breakdown and depression. She spent approximately eight months in the state mental hospital. Her other hospitalizations have occurred here in Southern California. Diagnosis is major depressive disorder. As far as I know A. received no outpatient therapy after her hospitalizations except for medication checks until this last hospitalizations when she was referred to a daytime treatment program in her community.

Personal History:

A. is an only child born into an Italian working class, Catholic family in New York City. She was educated in the public school system, however, dropped out during her senior year when her grades began to sharply decline. Up until her senior year A. reported that her grades were satisfactory but that she began losing interest in her school rapidly toward the end of her senior year. She further reported that when her senior year came all she was interested in was just getting through. According to A. she had dates but found that the only reason the boys asked her out was to "simply go to bed with me." A. does not recall anything especially good about her childhood except for the special times she spent with her father. When she was young her father, a television repairman, would take A. with him to work. They would spend many hours in his workshop, he teaching her how to fix televisions, and work with her hands on simple projects. These were the special times for A.; although these times too would change for her.

According to A. her parent's marriage really wasn't a marriage, although she imagined at one time they must have loved each other. Their trouble seemed to begin when she was born, but these were only vague memories. Her current memories of her parent's marriage were that her father virtually ignored her mother except for those times when they had to rush her to the hospital (usually 2-3 times per week). Her mother, a hypochondriac according to A., was very demanding and showed little to no love or affection toward A. or her father. A.'s mother was incessantly sick oftentimes screaming out in the middle of the night that she was dying, demanding that A. and her father take her to the hospital. Then, they would bring her home again even more demanding than when they had left the house. Her mother lay lifeless and listless on the couch in their small one bedroom flat calling out on those occasions when she wanted something or a special favor from A. A.'s father all but abdicated his role as husband, as did A.'s mother abdicate being wife and mother. This left A. in the roles of daughter, housekeeper, cook, nurse, wife, companion and daughter. A.'s mother refused to sleep in the bedroom choosing instead to use the family's couch as her bed (formerly A.'s bed). Not wanting to upset her mother A. slept on a makeshift bed on the floor close to her mother. As time plodded on for A. and she became a developing teenager she was invited to sleep in her father's bed. For A. this was a welcome relief. She felt secure and comforted by her father especially after a hard day at school, going to work with him, returning home to care for the needs and demands of her mother. As she crawled into the only bed, lumpy with springs, her father would gently stroke her head telling her bedtime stories until

she was asleep. After awhile the stroking became more than just stroking and the bedtime stories exchanged for stories of hardship, loneliness and love. Father and daughter became lovers. A. accepted her new found role at about age fourteen, for what else was she to do. Besides it felt so good to be close to the one you worshipped. This arrangement worked for several years. However, as A.'s high school years passed by she became withdrawn and her grades dropped from being average to failing. Her reputation grew with the boys as the hottest and most available date for the weekends. By the time she began her last year in high school she no longer felt like she belonged to herself. A.'s one haven was a girlfriend. They would spend the night at her house. Like her other relationships A.'s relationship with this friend became sexual. A. would tell how this was the most satisfying relationship she had ever had with anyone. She felt heard, understood and loved. But, however good this relationship was for A., it was not enough to sustain her. A. had a nervous breakdown. She was hospitalized for eight months searching and trying to recoup. Her father, once attentive to her every need, hardly darkened the doorway of the state mental institution. The doctors told her to get hold of herself, but she did not know what self she was to get hold of--daughter, wife, nurse, cook, housekeeper, lover, companion? After a year of putting herself "together" she was pronounced cured and discharged to her father's care.

Things had not really changed and A. was not really cured, she never really was quite sure just who she had put together, but nevertheless she once again returned to her father's comforting care. A. tried to make some changes but the old patterns trapped her. She was still the

hottest most available date for the weekends. She was still her mother's caretaker and her father's wife and lover. A. would sometimes go and sit next to her mother hoping for some hint of compassion, understanding, protection. She hoped for anything that would let her know that her mother cared, that her mother knew of the burden she was carrying. As evening passed into night A. would hear her father calling and the whisper of her mother "go and take care of your father." Did her mother really understand what that meant? A. didn't know for sure but guessed that she must.

Her anger grew, and the fear of losing herself to the depths again came true. This time "major depressive disorder" was her diagnosis. While in the "institution" A. had a religious experience. Her salvation had arrived. God had told her to go to a Convent and to serve Him. A. had a hard time finding the right Convent (or was it finding a Convent that would accept her?). As would have it "God worked in a mysterious way." One of her few visitors (maybe it was her only visitor) was a nun from an Upper New York State based Convent. A. showed promise as a sister--devout, conscientious, caring, committed, eager to please, willing to learn. The sister, "her sister in the faith," worked it so A. could come and study at the Convent. It wouldn't be easy. First A. would have to complete high school, then there would be religious studies, daily prayer and devotionals and work to help sustain the Convent. Could A. manage? "Yes, yes." The day of A.'s discharge was one filled with high hopes and great expectations--great things were to be, God had indeed blessed her.

A. arrived at the Convent and quickly acclimated herself to

the rigors and routines. She did well with her daily chores sometimes doing more than what was asked of her. Her school too showed signs of improving, although those years of not caring enough to study had taken their toll on her preparation for study, but this too was no obstacle in her eagerness to please and do well. Then it happened. One day word came that her mother was gravely ill and this time no faking. A. left the Convent, not knowing what to expect but feeling confident of her new found self. Four months of hard work in the Convent was surely going to sustain her this time.

Back at the flat she found her father waiting for her. The three room apartment was darker than she remembered, dishes were everywhere, the couch unmade, clothes were strewn all over. Her father greeted her warmly yet casually almost like he was one of their few visitors. He quickly filled her in on the details and they left for the hospital.

Driving with him in the familiar van she began to wonder what she would say and do when she saw her mother. She felt guilty because she hated her mother and wanted her to die; yet she was still hoping for some sign of love from her. A.'s cheery chatter about reminiscences with her father did not reflect her inner turmoil nor would it ever. She loved her father and wanted to take care of him. Certainly her mother never had, and he worked hard and deserved to be taken care of. The hospital had not changed--the smell of disinfectants on the welfare ward were just the same. The distant look of the people occupying every nook and cranny was just the same. The nurses still wore white and the aids were as irritable as ever. No one really noticed that she was back--again. She made her way to her mother's room pausing only long enough

to notice that her father had stayed behind in the waiting area. Her mother was more pale this time. She was still lifeless and listless. "That never changes." As A. walked to the bed her mother's eyes opened and acknowledged her presence. "Was she really dying this time?"

Back home with her father, A. told him of her time in the Convent and how she had tried to complete her GED but couldn't quite get the math. He tried to reassure her that that was alright--she was "still her daddy's little girl, the most important thing in his life."

For her nineteenth birthday A.'s father took her to his favorite bar. It was a grand night. At long last she finally got to meet all of his friends the ones he used to tell her about, and they laughed and talked all night. Going to the bar became a nightly habit for them while her mother was in the hospital. They didn't drink alot, couldn't really afford it, but the people, it was the people that counted the most. Days passed into weeks and with the passings A.'s mother regained her strength and returned home. Soon the fun stopped for A. and old patterns began to reemerge. In between her various roles A. would return to the bar just to laugh. On one of those occasions she met T. T. is a nice fellow, big-hearted, good-natured and madly in love with A. At last, A. thought, here is someone who really loves me for me and who will take care of me. She and T. were married by a Justice of the Peace one month after they met. A.'s mother did not attend the ceremony. She was too sick. Her father came and gave her away, and after giving her away he too went away.

A. had dreamed of and fantasized about her wedding night. It was going to be filled with love and romance. She didn't want to think about the fact that she really didn't love T. right now because she just

knew that one day with time she would love him. Thoughts filled her head about how T. was going to treat her like a queen, just as her father did. T. apologized for being so nervous. So instead of rushing things they began to tell each other secrets, secrets that would bring them closer together and help them to understand each other. A. already knew about T.'s bad home situation, how he was beaten with various objects for being so dumb. T. had a low I.Q. and was slow with book learning, but A. assured him that that was alright, she still loved him.

A. told T. of her special times with her father, how they would go to work together, how she learned all about T.V.'s, how they would spend time talking together or go out with his friends and spend the night laughing and having a good time, and how he would comfort her at night. Without warning T. erupted, smashing A. around the room. What had she said that would have made him react like that? This was her wedding night, the night she had fantasized about for so very long--a night filled with love and romance.

No one knew where A.'s father had gone after the wedding, except about a month later divorce papers arrived at the flat. A. was furious and heartbroken. Now what was she going to do? Her father had deserted her and left her mother's care to her. Faithfully A. nursed her mother, fed her, bathed her, cooked for her, ran errands for her. She and T. had a good marriage as long as A. was home taking care of the house and her mother. Then one day, unbeknown to everyone, A.'s father returned home--not to stay but to check on his little girl. A. was at first shocked and angry to see him, but soon, as before, her anger melted away into a feeling of warmth and comfort. She and her father

reconciled, in fact, A., T., and A.'s father were soon a threesome.

Several months had passed and A. was feeling sick, could not keep anything down, was tired and rung out. At the insistence of her father A. made an appointment with the doctor, diagnosis--pregnant. A. is overcome with joy. That night she carefully sets a romantic mood to break the news to T.--candles, his favorite dinner, a new dress, but not too sexy. T. doesn't like it when A. gets too sexy for fear of other men looking at her. Finally T. arrives home from work. They talk and laugh, savor the dinner, cuddle and kiss and when the time is right A. tells T. of their blessing. T. sits momentarily stunned and without warning leaps off the bed and with a shriek accuses her of having her father's baby.

Several years have passed--A.'s mother is still sick, living alone and being taken care of by neighbors. T., A., and their young daughter have moved to Southern California to find a better life for themselves. One year after arriving here A.'s father arrives on the scene. For the first several years he is very attentive to A. and her family, oftentimes helping them out of tight financial situations as well as lavishing his granddaughter with gifts. When T. and A. decide to buy a house A.'s father provides the down payment and moves in with them. This arrangement lasts a few months until the tensions become so bad that he is forced to move out. He finds work about sixty miles away and still maintains contact with them but becomes involved with a woman with young daughters and soon they marry. A.'s reaction to the marriage was mixed. It revived her feelings of anger and desertion, however, at the same time she was happy for him..."he deserves to have someone take care of him because he has taken care of everyone else his whole life." No sooner

had she said those words than she regretted them. She did not get along with her new stepmother, she became more and more angry at her because she kept her father from her and his granddaughter. A. had a nervous breakdown and was hospitalized.

Meantime A.'s mother tried to reestablish contact. A. refused to have anything to do with her in spite of her mother's efforts to rehabilitate herself. Nothing appealed to A. Tensions between T. and A. mounted. T. found a job in a factory and was earning good money. He provided all the necessities for his family and, when he could, a few extras. A. took care of all the household chores and bookkeeping responsibilities. Their daughter was doing well in school. Her grades were average, she was involved in after-school activities and clubs, and was a member of the Girl Scouts. A. threw herself headlong into her daughter's activities. While A. appeared to be functioning well her life and identity were slipping away from her once again. T.'s jealousy was making her crazy. She had to give up her bowling league because other men would talk to her. She had to give up going out with the girls because T. accused her of being with "a bunch of lesbians." If her activities were not confined to their daughter's activities or activities with T., T. would become enraged and physically abuse her. As a result, A. spent more and more time in the house secluded from the outside world. Soon the seclusion began to have serious effects. She would erupt at her daughter for the slightest reason and send her to her room, she no longer had the energy to dress herself, fix a meal, be involved in her daughter's activities. A.'s greatest fear and resolved commitment of not becoming like her mother came true (although A. could never admit this). For two

years prior to coming to the hospital A. had not slept with T., but rather chose to sleep on the couch in their livingroom.

As would have it old patterns die hard and learned lessons are usually passed on. A.'s daughter sought comfort from T. as her mother regressed into a vegetative state. In light of all of this chaos and despair something deep inside A. was yet alive and provided her with the motivation to seek help.

A. sought help the only way and at the only place she knew-- suicide and the hospital. I was working at a Chaplain at the hospital to which A. was admitted. She sought me out one day and told me her story.

A Reflection on the Case of A.

Looking at the problem of incest culturally and clinically we can say that incest seems to fall into a very broad category called socially deviant behavior. And within that category there are two main categories which seem to provide some answers for socially deviant behavior. The first category is referred to as social pathology. Within this category can be found such factors as economic depression, overcrowded living conditions, mental retardation, psychosis and alcoholism. Meiselman points out that the individual pathologies found in this category tend to weaken an individual's ability to inhibit anti-social behavior.¹ These two categories while helpful in providing insights and understandings are not complete nor do they provide an across-the-board

¹Karin Meiselman, Incest: A Psychological Study of Causes and Effects with Treatment Recommendations (San Francisco: Jossey-Bass, 1979) p. 83.

profile of an incestuous male. At many points they overlap and on all points they fail to address incest as a systems problem. Many experts agree that an incestuous relationship while critically stressful and disruptive to personal development does not in and of itself cause a victim to become psychologically, emotionally, or physically dysfunctional. Rather the total environment as well as genetic makeup of a personality attribute to the wellness or illness of an incest victim. I would tend to agree with this perspective, however, in light of this, I do not want to throw the categories out with the bath water but integrate this with Weinberg's understanding of the family as a social unit within the global context.

As is evident by A.'s story, we can quickly see the correlations between the categories and her family situation--the low family income, the overcrowded living situation and the sense of powerlessness that must have been felt by all to change the situation. It is difficult to assess to what extent individual pathology played since there were no contacts with other family members and A.'s perception of both her father (who could do no wrong) and her mother (who could do no right) were badly distorted. My instinct informs me, however, that if we look at T. closely we could more or less come up with a close picture of A.'s father.

While no family violence is apparent in A.'s family of origin we do not know this for a fact. It would appear that her father had some sort of personality disorder and had an inadequate personality as evidenced by his over protectiveness and constant monitoring of A.'s activities. I do not find or sense that her father is retarded or psychotic. It is interesting, however, that A. would choose a husband

with a very low I.Q. bordering on dull with many of the same characteristics as her father. This may indicate that her father also had a low I.Q. Meiselman points out that "subnormal intelligence, while not an important factor in all incest cases, could be a factor that enables fathers to disregard the incest taboo, either by limiting their understanding or what sexual relationships are forbidden or by impairing impulse control through a decreased ability to visualize the consequences of their actions."² On the other hand, some researchers believe that many incestuous fathers come from a background of chaos and abuse and are deprived of the affection as children. As a result they lack appropriate role models and skills of showing affection which could also attribute to the liberties they take with their children. This could be the situation in T.'s background. In A.'s case, since no violence was reported, it would seem then that she was betrayed by the beloved father. However, I cannot let go of the fact that she married an abusive man.

While most fathers do not neatly fit into any particular category they do share some similar characteristics. They are usually perceived to be good men, hard working, perhaps melancholy, having a sound character, are respected as a family man and seen as not having any serious behavior problems. This would again apparently be true with regard to A.'s father and I know as fact it is true for T. The other characteristic, both men share, along with others, is that they never seem to have succeeded in establishing gratifying social relationships

²Ibid., p. 88.

outside the family. A. did not speak of her father's friends except as occasional visitors and T. was known as the factory clown, liked by everyone but not known by anyone. A. and T. have tried to establish friendships outside their marriage but T.'s jealousy always got in their way usually causing a scene of sorts and resulting in their abrupt departure from social situations. One could draw the conclusion that A. was always with her father when they went anywhere and T. never let A. out of his sight socially. Clinical studies indicate that the endogamic characteristic is prevalent in most incest cases and can be recognized by the fact that the father sets the style of family interaction. This particular characteristic is certainly evident in this case.

Another interesting point in this case are the kinds of men in A.'s life, both having unrealistic expectations of her. A.'s father, dependent personality type, seemed to desire that A. prop him up in almost all occasions--at work, at the bar, at home, he followed her to California, and when tensions got too bad he married again, a woman with a young daughter. A. tried to escape a bad home situation by marrying T. a dominant personality type who seems to want A. to be completely dependent on him for everything, money, food, clothing, housing and social outlets. When she seeks to escape he becomes abusive. However, A. does escape just like her mother by becoming psychologically, emotionally, and physically absent.

It would be interesting to know what happened in A.'s family of origin when her mother abdicated her role to A. We know it how happened in A.'s current family.

Both A. and her mother are typical of incestuous situations.

Meiselman points out that in incestuous families "the mother has often been perceived as the family member who sets up the father and daughter usually by withdrawing from her sexual role in the marriage and ignoring the special relationship that may develop between husband and daughter."³ Several authors (Sgroi, Forward, Butler, Meiselman) have noted that the mother's relationship with her own mother has been filled with rejection and hostility. Again this cannot be substantiated in the case of A.'s mother but can be in A.'s case with her own mother. It is interesting to note that A.'s mother attempted several times to reestablish contact with A. but A. rebuffed her every time. However, as A. attempted to reestablish contact with her father and he remained distant and unresponsive A. began to write her mother in hopes of reestablishing contact with her. In doing so it would seem that A. was following a pattern of incested daughters who in some way remain tied to their mothers with the hopes of love and approval. During her time in the hospital, I observed that before A. felt the rejection of her father she would seek out relationships with female staff members in hopes of gaining their support and approval. As soon as one of us would confront A. with an issue she would see us as a bad person who did not like or approve of her. This kind of behavior would indicate that A. had not developed appropriate social skills, and in addition, had little aptitude for maintaining and developing relationships. This behavior was not limited to her time in the hospital but can be traced throughout her developing years.

³Ibid., p. 112.

Another characteristic typical of a post incest survivor is the chronic depression with mood swings. A. has a history of being depressed and not knowing why. If we believe what some say about depression being turned in anger than we can say that A. is a very angry person. And angry she should be. A., like about sixty percent of post incest survivors, is not mad at her father and has in fact forgiven him because of the circumstances but rather is furious with her mother because she did not take care of things. By not taking care of things we can assume that A. means her mother abdicated her role as mother, wife, nurturer, homemaker, etc.

The long term effects of A.'s incestuous relationship with her father are evident. In my opinion, she presented as severely disturbed (serious suicide attempts and a break with reality). If we examine the usual lists of presenting problems for post incest survivors we can see that A. at some point in her history talks of conflict with and fear of her husband, physical problems, depression, conflict with parents, suicidal, and sexually dysfunctional.

A. often worried about her own forgiveness as a participant in the affair. In fact she worried that she was the cause of it by agreeing to sleep with her father. This kind of guilt is not uncommon and is one of the most difficult symptoms to move the person through. A. could not understand that she was a victim of incest and lived her life as a victim. She could easily claim responsibility for the incest but could not claim responsibility for her life as an adult. In other words, all of her problems were because of someone else's actions. As long as I worked with A. she never did move past this point. It would

then seem to me that one of the most critical interventions for incest survivors would be to help them understand that they were the victim and help them to move past their learned helplessness. I realize that this educative process is not limited to the victim but to the general population as well. This is where I agree with feminist therapists (Sgroi and Meiselman) that no matter how developed or how seductive a child, it is the parent who has the responsibility to say no to the incestuous affair. As a child A. like other incest victims was dependent on her father to meet her needs, passive (perhaps for fear of abuse) and powerless to change her situation.

Denial is another key factor. I cannot speak to the denial in A.'s family of origin but for A. denial of the pattern repeating itself was one of her strongest coping mechanisms. Denial and the way A. used it to protect herself both fascinated and frustrated me. She denied that she was the victim at the same time being angry at her mother's denial of what was happening between she and her own daughter for an incestuous affair while at the same time threatening to kill T. if he ever laid a hand on her daughter. Certainly A.'s denial is distorted and unhealthy but how to intervene? The fear of change in A.'s life surely must have been greater than the threat of setting up her own daughter.

In light of all this what kinds of conclusions can we draw about the incestuous situation and participants. Beginning with the father one might say that he is a victim of his own deprivation as a child rendering him bankrupt socially, personally, emotionally; he probably has a low self esteem, feels powerless, is probably abusive

and has a personality disorder. Susan Forward in her book Betrayal of Innocence identifies the father's need to reduce his sense of inadequacy as a primary factor in incest cases. This would certainly appear to be the case in A.'s situation both in her family of origin and in her marriage.

The mother is probably depressed, absent from the home through illness, has poor living skills and abdicates her role as mother and wife.

The daughter is probably passive, powerless, mature for her years because of the role reversal, does poorly in school, is also depressed, suffers from a neurotic guilt, lacks social skills, cannot maintain relationships, is sexually dysfunctional, and has problems relating to men unless seen as harmless of nonthreatening such as homosexuals. Forward identifies one of the primary needs of the daughter in not resisting the incest is her need to belong to someone especially if she has been rejected by her mother. More than likely in getting this need met in this way is what produces the neurotic guilt.

Intervention for post incest survivors has changed quite a bit in recent years with the emergence of the women's movement. However, Sgroi is quick to caution us that the field is still too new and evolving for any authoritative answers and criteria for pat interventions. She does, however, provide us with some practical guidelines for intervention.

First and foremost, Sgroi says we need to have a basic

understanding of the phenomenon and dynamics of the problem.⁴ Sgroi spends much of her efforts dealing with effective intervention for children and does not provide as much insight with regard to post incest survivors. The issue of treatment for those women who are post incest survivors will be dealt with in a later chapter.

⁴Suzanne M. Sgroi, Handbook of Clinical Intervention in Child Sexual Abuse (Lexington, MA: Lexington Books, 1983) p. 9.

Chapter 4

TREATMENT OF INCEST

A Beginning Word

For purposes of this project I have chosen to examine the treatment for adult female incest survivors. An adult incest survivor is someone who has had, as an adult, a memory recall of past incestuous experiences. The recall can come at any time during her adult life. The recall of the event or events does not necessarily come out of the blue, but is usually preceded by a variety of presenting problems such as depression, suicidal ideations, marital and/or sexual difficulties to name a few.

Unlike children currently involved in families where incest is or has occurred, the adult incest survivor does not always have the opportunity to deal directly with those who were responsible in her situation. As a result, the dynamics and treatment approach could be different for helping the adult survivor find resolution to her conflict. While the child could oftentimes (but not always, depending on if they had been permanently removed from the home) have the opportunity to confront directly the perpetrator, the adult survivor, on the other hand, must deal with her confrontation through role plays, talking to an empty chair, or visiting the gravesite of the perpetrator thereby possibly slowing her healing process. In each case, however, it is important that the child victim and adult survivor find some kind of resolution. Resolution is important because it enables and empowers the survivor to reintegrate herself into healthy relationships and to

break the cyclic nature of the abusive pattern.

Female adult survivors and child victims often share the same dynamics. James and Nasjleti point out that role reversal (or the need to parent their parents), excessive dependency needs, pseudomaturity, guilt and shame are often shared.¹

Treatment for adult survivors is in the process of evolving. One approach has been systems theory which is a commonly used for treating distressed families. In some cases this may be an appropriate mode when dealing with children, however, as a starting point and treatment mode for adult survivors, systems theory does not address the problems of guilt and sin and the need felt by the survivor for forgiveness. In addition, systems theory assumes that all participants in a family have a role and assume some level of responsibility for what happens in their family system. It is widely recognized today, that the child in the incestuous situation is not responsible nor can she be held accountable for the behaviors of adults. In this regard, the systems approach for treating an adult survivor is an inappropriate beginning point. I do believe, however, that systems theory can help the survivor not to continue the legacy of incest by repeating victim behavior. In this regard, systems can be useful in long term treatment procedures, because it keeps the focus of treatment in the present context of her living situation and does not necessarily dwell in past events.

Another form of treatment being used today is the use of the

¹Beverly James and Maria Nasjleti, Treating Sexually Abused Children and Their Families (Palo Alto: Consulting Psychologists Press, 1983) p. 6.

survivors own story as a means for finding her personal power and clues to her own healing. Like systems, however, this too falls short in addressing the problems of guilt and sin and her need for forgiveness.

For my search for an effective treatment method I have drawn heavily upon three authors for my understanding of the dynamics and treatment for incest--Jean Baker Miller, Helen V. Collier and Suzanne M. Sgroi. Together these three authors in dialog with John Wesley will establish an effective treatment method that will move the adult survivor into a healthy and whole lifestyle.

Dynamics and Clinical Treatment: An Overview

Suzanne Sgroi in her book Handbook for Clinical Intervention in Child Sexual Abuse outlines ten impact issues for adult survivors of child sexual abuse: "1) The Damaged Goods Syndrome; 2) Guilt; 3) Fear; 4) Depression; 5) Low Self-Esteem and Poor Social Skills; 6) Repressed Anger and Hostility; 7) Impaired Ability to Trust; 8) Blurred Role Boundaries; 9) Pseudomaturity Coupled with Failure to Accomplish Developmental Tasks; and 10) Self-Mastery and Control."² She goes on to claim that the first five impact issues are likely to affect all children who have been sexually abused and the last five are much more likely to affect intrafamily child-sexual-abuse victims.³ I do not intend to debate this particular point, but do suggest in A.'s case all ten impact issues apply.

²Suzanne M. Sgroi, Handbook of Clinical Intervention in Child Sexual Abuse (Lexington, MA: Lexington Books, 1983) p. 109.

³Ibid.

While one does not necessarily begin therapy by addressing these specific issues, to be aware of these impact issues as suggested by Sgroi, is an important insight for the counselor. By being aware of these impact issues the counselor is aware of the internal dynamics which possibly are affecting the internal and external realities of the client. Further by being aware of these impact issues the counselor can then take into account how a trust relationship might best be established between them.

If what Sgroi says is true, and I believe it to be, as I believe Miller and Collier would also, that the root of the dynamic is the issue of control and self-mastery of one's life, the counselor, it would seem, should have some understanding of the larger picture which includes the way society has been structured between a dominant and a subordinate group. This would enable the counselor to see the client as a whole person. Jean Baker Miller in her book Toward A New Psychology of Women talks about domination and subordination. She begins her discussion by first addressing the larger societal issues of inequality and then moves into how societal inequality has impacted the development of women.

Miller claims there are two types of inequality--temporary inequality and "enforceable" (my word) inequality. Temporary inequality are those relationships--teacher/student, parent/child, therapist/client, that are socially defined as being unequal. In these kinds of relationships it is the "desired" intent or purpose of the one socially defined as superior to educate or bring to maturity the lesser; thereby ending the inequality in the relationship by empowering the lesser to make

mature and responsible choices in their lives.⁴ The trouble with this, Miller warns, is that "these relationships may stem from the fact that they exist within the context of the second type of inequality that tends to overwhelm the ways we learn to operate. The second type molds the very ways we perceive and conceptualize what we are doing in the first, most basic kind of relationship. The second type of inequality teaches us how to enforce inequality, but not how to make the journey from unequal to equal."⁵ While Miller does not discount the importance of the first type of inequality, she does contend that the "underlying notion is that this second type has determined and still determines the only ways we can think and feel in the first type."⁶ This would be in accord with how Collier and Sgroi suggest in approaching an effective treatment plan for an incest survivor. Collier maintains that there are two realities--external and internal. She begins her model of change with the internal reality of "What do I own as true for me? What part of reality do I accept responsibility for? What barriers do I erect which create and/or compound the situation?" She then moves to the external reality of: "What is outside me that I must respond to? What part of reality do I place responsibility for outside myself? What barriers are erected outside which create and/or compound the situation?"⁷

⁴ Jean Baker Miller, Toward A New Psychology of Women (Boston: Beacon Press, 1976) p. 4.

⁵ Ibid., p. 5.

⁶ Ibid.

⁷ Helen V. Collier, Counseling Women: A Guide for Therapists (New York: Free Press, 1982) p. 21.

Going back to Sgroi's point that the root dynamic of incest survivors in particular and women in general (Miller and Collier) is control and self-mastery, we can understand Miller's concept of personality theory and apply it to A.

As is evidenced by A.'s story we can see the correlations between Miller's two types of inequality and her family system. The societal inequality of a low-income family living in an over-crowded flat and the sense of powerlessness that must have been felt by A.'s father at not having "made it" and the sense of powerlessness that must have been felt by all to change the situation. It is difficult to assess to what extent individual pathology played since the counselor had no contacts with other family members. The one assessment that does seem possible is that A.'s perception of both her father (who could do no wrong) and her mother (who could do no right) were badly distorted.

In attempting to understand A.'s current situation we must look at the environment of which she is the product. Her father, a submember of the dominant group, while male, never really made it into the "club." He was an Italian immigrant who took what jobs he could until he trained himself as a T.V. repairman. Miller would suggest that because he never fully gained entrance into the dominant group he turned his quest for control into his family. Even here he still was not totally in control. His wife refused to be his wife when A. came of age. She withheld from him the very thing that could and would make him feel like a man--sex. Instead she had him and A. running at her every command, to meet her incessant needs. My thought in light of Miller's theory that the basic instinct of the subordinate group is survival

by understanding what pleases the dominant group is that A.'s father learned how to please his boss and that A. came to know what would please her father enabling them to have their special times together.

While A.'s father set the style of family interaction, at least between himself and A., I believe that it was A.'s mother who really set the family style by withdrawing. It would appear that A.'s father, as Miller suggests, was taking his frustration at not being in control in his work place out on A. who in no way could respond to his style of coping except to submit to his sexual overtures. While this would tend to suggest a dominant personality type, I would suggest that A.'s father could not cope with responsibility thereby needing something or someone whom he could control by becoming overwhelmingly dependent on her. A.'s father seemed to desire that A. prop him up in almost all occasions--at work, out drinking, at home, he followed her to California and when tensions got too bad between them he remarried again, a woman with a young daughter. This type of behavior would fit with Miller's theory of the societal patterns of the subordinate group by reacting to change rather than responding to it. It would also suggest the correctness of Miller's theory that members of the subordinate group seldom have the opportunity for self-discovery because they have been trained to believe that they have one, perhaps two, acceptable roles in life--namely providing services that the dominant group does not want to do. For example, A.'s father took any job he could, in turn A. took the job of providing caretaking services to her father because of the abdication of her mother. Hence we see the dilemma that Miller was addressing as temporary inequality being fed by enforceable inequality because both A. and her

father were forced to remain in positions of subservience imposed upon them by their environment.

What A.'s environment taught her to be was a good "lesser" according to Miller's theory.⁸ While A. was dutifully carrying out her role as prescribed by her dominants (mother and father) she was all the while struggling for her own self-mastery. While her attempts at self control and mastery engrained her deeper into a subservient position, they are nonetheless reflections of her strengths and capabilities for personal growth which the counselor should be affirming and building upon. The strengths which A. displayed in her attempts at self expression were those times she had the nervous breakdown and had to be hospitalized, her try at becoming a nun, her relationship with her female friend, her marriage to T. and her attempted suicide.

Each one of these attempts, I believe, reflect a different quality and strength which are potential building blocks for her growth and personhood. In light of this, Collier's understanding of the art of therapy as lying both "in working to utilize the experience and skills which a woman brings into therapy, and at the same time, assisting her to expand herself and the number of options which she is capable of choosing" makes sense in A.'s case.⁹ The choices A. made at particular times in her development were the only choices she felt she had at the time (and they may very well have been at the time). The counselor can help the person see and make new choices if the counselor is

⁸Miller, p. 5.

⁹Collier, p. 15.

"knowledgeable not just about the individual client but also about the world within which she moves and in response to which she has to make her choices."¹⁰

Collier continues by saying that the counselor must do three things

- 1) The counselor should seek to counteract the negative consequences of socialization, by replacing dysfunctional with functional models of thinking, feeling and behaving;
- 2) the counselor should provide the client with whatever she is unlikely to get from her own environment through knowledge of resources and emotional support; and
- 3) the counselor should work openly with any crisis or problem in any aspect of the client's life by seeing the client as a whole person, helping her to see beyond the immediate problem and helping her to clarify both the problem and her choices.¹¹

How then does the counselor carry this out? Achieving a level of self-mastery is hard enough for anyone; however, for incest survivors such as A. it is doubly difficult because of the sustained repressive/oppressive situations she has continually found herself in. Therefore, it is important that the counselor not be overwhelmed or passive with the client's story. Rather the counselor should be a role model for the client being someone who can make choices and see beyond the immediate problem (an educator of sorts). Finally the counselor should avoid "reflecting the inequality with which society in general regards women..."¹² Most importantly, however, the counselor should be about the business of being herself which in turn will enable and empower the client to be about the business of being herself. If this happens then the ultimate

¹⁰Ibid.

¹¹Ibid.

¹²Ibid., p. 19.

goal as expressed by Miller, that the subordinate becomes a peer is reached. And that this is best accomplished if the counselor is aware of the probable areas of differences between herself and the client.

Since the role of the counselor is ultimately that of a change agent, the counselor needs to be observant when first approached by the client. In other words, what is the current psychological state of mind of the client? Collier puts it as "a matter of being able to see and hear with a purpose."¹³ What is the client telling the counselor non-verbally as well as verbally by her appearance, tone of voice, eye contact, etc. A series of questions clarifying why the client has made contact, how she is currently feeling, and what her expectations are are important beginnings in the process because they begin the clarifying process as well as reveal the state of congruence in the client's life.

The state of congruence in A's life when she saw me was nil. This would be in keeping with both Miller and Sgroi's understanding of A.'s development at this time in her life. A. presented as confused, depressed, child-like, very needy, blunted and blank. This according to Miller should not surprise anyone in light of A.'s socialization and personal family history. Miller would have expected A. to present like this because she was never given the opportunity to develop herself as a person. The principle around which A. learned to organize her life was no longer appropriate for her. As was stated earlier, A. learned to be a good "lesser" (being not as good as another) by forming herself and her identity into that person who could best benefit others--her father,

¹³Ibid., p. 22.

her mother, her husband, men in general, her male relatives, and her daughter. As Miller points out, our development proceeds "only by means of affiliation."¹⁴ She further states that the "one central feature of women is that they stay with, build on and develop in a context of affiliations...and further that the sense of self becomes very much organized around being able to make and then to maintain affiliation and relationships."¹⁵

In our initial and subsequent interviews A. displayed the characteristic patterns that one would expect to see--little to no eye contact, slumped shoulders, not much verbalization, extremely passive, low energy level, disjointed thought process, a disheveled appearance, and an overwhelming sense of guilt at being away from her daughter. While not all of the impact issues suggested by Sgroi were presented by A. in the first few interviews I could sense their presence--guilt, fear, depression, low self-esteem and lack of trust.

Needless to say it was very difficult to establish any trust between us, especially because she knew I was a minister. A. felt as though she had sinned and could not be forgiven by attempting to take her life, not going to confession, leaving her daughter, hating her mother, etc. As she told me more of her story she was surprised at my lack of judgment and condemnation of her actions. In response to this she began giving me gifts, small at first, and then more lavish. As the gifts became more lavish I confronted her on this behavior. She

¹⁴Miller, p. 83.

¹⁵Ibid.

became angry at me withdrawing and refusing to see me individually or in the group I was co-leading. According to Miller, Sgroi, and Collier this reaction should be expected and even anticipated in light of A.'s history and lack of relational skills.

I used this behavior as issues between us as an indicator of how she related to others. Later I moved on to her anger at her mother and T. and finally dealt with her lack of inappropriate social skills. As we entered into this phase she became very child-like and needy carrying with her stuffed animals indicating what kind of mood she was in that day--good or bad.

As we began dealing with her anger at her mother and T., A. began getting more energy. As we talked about her lack of friends and support she would move into a depressed state clutching her stuffed animal tightly (that's an understatement).

While we were moving back and forth between these issues she would always end the session by saying how guilty she felt and that she needed to get out of the hospital and return home. When I pushed her on her feelings of guilt two things would happen--she would get very quiet or she would attack me personally saying that I didn't care about or understand her.

In my efforts to understand her I did become frustrated and angry to the point of not wanting to work with her any longer. She was not helping me to understand and was thereby stalling the process so that she didn't have to make any choices or changes in her life. My supervisor confronted me about my anger at A., and I became aware that what I disliked in A. I hated in myself. I hated my own confusion and anger at

losing my traditional affiliations and support system and the fear of verbalizing that, taking the risk of moving on, and losing the respect and support of those people whose expectations I was trying to meet.

When I was able to verbalize to A. what she stirred in me and reflect back to her what was happening between us I think our trust in each other solidified. A. was able to talk about her need to be a child and be taken care of, her anger at her father for remarrying and deserting her, and her need to leave T. and make a life of her own.

As the time got closer for A. to be discharged from the hospital, she became more animated, confident of her decision to separate from T. and enter into a day treatment program. The night before she was to be discharged she began to self destruct emotionally, mentally and physically by cutting and inserting objects into herself. This kind of action according to Miller and Sgroi might be expected from someone who had not fully determined, with assurance, that could be responsible for own life. Miller, in particular, would term this a "negative therapeutic reaction" meaning that someone had made personal gains and gotten worse after it.¹⁶ As was to become obvious by A.'s actions she had made her decisions "lacking full consciousness, creating out of what was available"¹⁷ for her. This was the old pattern of self-destruction.

A. had not come to terms with her own center as a resource for her recovery. She had instead relied on previous modes and understandings for her actions. She in essence, continued to describe herself in

¹⁶Ibid., p. 93.

¹⁷Ibid., p. 94.

derogatory terms treating herself as "damaged goods" by mutilating herself, thereby reaffirming her low self esteem and unworthiness.

In her efforts to become autonomous A. in our time together could not risk getting angry at her father for fear of totally losing him. Instead she just outrightly rejected him saying that she didn't need anyone, she would do it on her own. When the time came for her to do it on her own she collapsed. Miller would point out that A. was possibly playing the part of her father by becoming the "immune male" disengaging herself and her need for other people.¹⁸ Instead of moving out of a position of powerless dependency on others for her self-definition and into a mature dependency and recognition of her need for affiliation A. was creating for herself, once again, defeat and isolation.

If we take Miller a step further, she would say that A. was afraid of her own power. Which is only logical because when A. decided to come with T. to California and establish a life with him, her father deserted her (in A.'s eyes) remarrying and refusing to spend time with her or even to come and see her in the hospital. Hence. the feelings of alienation and betrayal were once again kicked up and A.'s ability to trust others and herself crumbled.

The one thing that A. could trust were those times when she self-destructed and regressed into being a child, others primarily institutions, would be available to take care of her.

John Wesley: His Contribution to Contemporary Theology and Psychology
As It Relates to Adult Female Incest Survivors

John Wesley is said to have had a "wider constructive influence

¹⁸Ibid., p. 105

in the sphere of practical religion than any other man who has appeared since the sixteenth century."¹⁹ Wesley in developing his theology stressed not just doctrines but also a way of life. This is especially seen throughout his sermons and personal letters. Wesley's theological positions embraced both belief and action, and provided the foundations upon which he builds his understanding of salvation.

One might say that Wesley was a systematic thinker, placing great importance upon the study of scripture in his early years. However, a conversion experience at Aldersgate, England convicted him of God's grace in his life. This and other experiences in his life and others led him to value the importance of experience in relation to the study of scripture.

Wesley's approach to theology employed a system that has come to be known to us as the "quadrilateral." This quadrilateral, while not directly developed by Wesley as we know it today, reflects his method of doing theology. It is also helpful to us in discerning the meaning of Wesley's contribution to theological understandings, especially when used as a guideline in the treatment of adult female incest survivors.

Within this quadrilateral formulation we find a balance for developing our faith in order that we might grow in the love and knowledge and grace of God. The four components of this quadrilateral are scripture, reason, tradition, and experience. A closer look at these four components is helpful because the incest survivor is essentially asking for help with her faith in order to make changes in her life.

¹⁹ Harold Lindstrom, Wesley and Sanctification (Wilmore, KY: Francis Asbury Pub. Co. 1980) p. 1.

This involves releasing the power of her past which has defined who she is and how she relates to herself, to others and to God. By releasing her past, I mean that she releases the power it has had in controlling her behavior thereby keeping her in destrubtive patterns of relating to her environment. In addition, as she grows in faith she becomes empowered through the grace of God in her life to enter into the new possibilities of healthy relationships with herself, her God and others.

Wesley emphasized the importance of Scripture as the primary source for recognizing how God works salvation in individuals throughout history. In addition, we are to draw from scripture inspiration that God is indeed active and present in our lives. However, if "Scripture stands alone as our primary source of faith faith can become locked within the narrow confines of a particular and usually unexamined, hermaneutical principle."²⁰ For the incest survivor seeking to change her ways of relating to her environment becoming locked into a particular hermaneutical principle can keep her locked into destructive relational patterns, thereby limiting her perception of God's grace in her life. By helping her to reexamine and reinterpret Scripture, using as a guideline the quadri-lateral, she can with the help of the pastoral counselor find new ways and insights into the way God is at work in the world and her life, thereby finding new inspiration from the Bible.

Tradition can be a source in helping the survivor discover the many ways in which the Christian life has grown and been enriched through the centuries. However, if tradition stands alone "faith can easily become absolutized and locked into the past. Without the liberating

²⁰ George B. Hartzog, III, "An Explanation of the Methodist Quadrilateral," 1979 (Unpublished) p. 1.

exposure to Scripture and the testing and verification of experience and reason, faith easily runs the risk of dogmatism."²¹ This particular hazard especially as it has been experienced by women in general, is pointed out by such contemporary feminist theologians as Ruether, Daly, Russell and Fiorenza. Elisabeth Fiorenza commenting on the importance of Letty Russell's distinction among Tradition, tradition, and traditions says that:

Tradition refers to the total traditioning process, while the tradition refers to Christ as the content of the traditioning process. Traditions, in turn are the facts and patterns constituting church history. Since the biblical message was addressed to a patriarchal society, the form of the biblical promise is situation-variable and relative to its patriarchal culture. Patriarchal imagery and androcentric language are the form but not the content of the biblical message. Since the content of the tradition is Christ, feminist theology must make clear that Christ's work was not first of all that of being a male but that of being the new human.²²

For the incest survivor, the essence of her healing begins when the pastoral counselor can help her to reframe and reinterpret tradition in light of the liberating message of Scripture and in verification and validation of her own experiences. While Wesley did not regard experience as a source of doctrine, he did recognize that experience gives vitality and assurance to our faith. For the incest survivor, whose experience oftentimes is never validated because the "secret" of her incestuous experiences must always be kept. Assurance that her experiences are real and believed by the pastoral counselor can liberate her into the realm of new experiences thereby releasing her from the secret that has

²¹ Ibid.

²² Elisabeth Schüssler Fiorenza, In Memory of Her: A Feminist Theological Reconstruction of Christian Origins (New York: Crossroads, 1984) p. 15.

held her captive. If, however, in the validation of her experiences faith is not tempered with reason she can easily be tossed to and fro upon the tides of emotionalism. In the validation of her experiences, the incest survivor can begin to put her past into perspective and redeem her experience drawing from it power to exercise the freedom to move into new experiences.

"Reason, as a source and norm for faith, lends clarification and credibility to one's beliefs and actions. Where consistency and coherence of thought is lacking, belief and action in one dimension of faith is in danger of conflicting with belief and action in another dimension."²³ This will become more clear in the discussion regarding sin and the survivor's doublebind. If reason stands alone for the incest survivor her faith runs the risk of becoming strictly intellectual thereby keeping her in conflict with her thoughts and feelings.

In light of this quadrilateral we can see that

Scripture, reason, tradition, and experience serve as a check and balance on each other as sources for faith. When all four are used in the pilgrimage of faith the Christian life becomes open to the presence of God doing the work of sanctification through the Holy Spirit.²⁴

Further, we can see that each of these components provide an active integrated part in developing a dynamic method out of which we can begin to understand Wesley's continued impact on contemporary theology and psychology. One aspect of Wesley's theology that is particularly relevant for us today is his understanding of salvation.

²³Hartzog, p. 2.

²⁴Ibid.

For him salvation is a present salvation, something attainable today. Salvation, for Wesley, is a journey toward perfection. Another way of interpreting perfection is as Lindstrom does when he says salvation is a journey into health, a movement toward wholeness.²⁵ For Wesley, salvation is a dynamic process which is reflected in his order of salvation. It includes always method and movement.

Wesley's process of salvation begins with prevenient grace. The term prevenient comes from the Latin "pre," meaning before and "vino," meaning to come--therefore prevenient grace is that grace which precedes justification. Prevenient grace is present to everyone before they are even aware of it. Prevenient grace is important to Wesley as a beginning point because it speaks to our basic need of survival. For the incest survivor, survival and her instinct to survive is usually what has motivated her to keep on going. Splitting herself into different personalities, removing herself emotionally from the event and pretending that it is not happening to her, or else simply blocking her memory are all ways she seeks to survive her situation. However, in her effort to survive she has alienated herself from her self. She has been forced to play many different roles in the family--mother, wife, housekeeper, and daughter. For the incest survivor even to seek counseling is a way in which God's prevenient grace works in her life as she seeks to become a whole and integrated person.

Wesley draws a distinction between prevenient grace and convincing grace which might also be referred to as stages of grace.

²⁵Lindstrom, p. 41.

Prevenient grace, that which draws us toward the knowledge of God and life is not that grace which convicts us of our brokenness. Convincing grace is the self-knowledge that we are impoverished spiritually and therefore broken. This convincing grace precedes our justification before God because we have come to know that we deserve the wrath of God and, further, that we are wholly dependent upon God for our salvation. Justification by faith informs us that Christ's death and resurrection atoned for our sinfulness, and that nothing we can do in the way of good works can atone for our sinfulness.

Wesley understands original sin not only as guilt, but also as inherent corruption. In other words, Wesley says that all human beings are born inherently corrupt, being sinful in nature and in need of forgiveness. Lindstrom speaks of Wesley's understanding of original sin as having "both an objective and subjective angle."²⁶ Objective sin is alienation from God, not being in right relationship or having knowledge of God. In other words, good works done without the knowledge of God do not have merit before God. Works done with the knowledge of God have merit because God is present in them. Wesley, making this very point, says that:

...all works done before justification are not good: in the Christian sense, forasmuch as they spring not of faith in Jesus Christ; yea rather, for that they are not done as God hath willed and commanded them to be done, we doubt not but they have the nature of sin.²⁷

God then becomes the object of our faith and actions in the world.

²⁶Ibid., p. 40.

²⁷John Wesley, John Wesley's Forty-Four Sermons (London: Epworth Press, 1975) p. 56.

Wesley's understanding of sin was that sin was ever present in the world, almost like an habitual state of the collective. And the world because of the fall of Adam is in habitual sin, so we are born of sin and into sin. The concept of objective sin finds its parallel in Wesley's understanding of justification by faith. Justification for Wesley is our being saved through grace. It is the receiving of God's undeserved favor, God's total pardon. We are justified, or forgiven because of God's generosity. There is nothing, according to Wesley, that we can do to merit this gift from God, except to accept it.

Subjective sin, unlike objective sin which is collective, is individualistic in nature and deals with our brokenness in relation to ourselves and others. In other words, subjective sin informs us of how we will deal with collective sin. It is the law that convicts us of our collective sinfulness and that we are "justified by faith, without the deeds of the law..."²⁸ However, the moral law by justification is replaced with the law of love. If we have truly been justified, accepted Christ, and what he has done for us, then there should be some signs of change in the way we relate to God, to ourselves, and the world--Wesley refers to this as the fruits of justification. Subjective sin finds its parallel in Wesley's understanding of sanctification or new birth.

The decision lies with each person as to whether or not they will cooperate with God's grace or block it. Wesley believes that in every person there is, on some level, the discernment between good and evil, the desire to please God, and the desire for life. Wesley's not

²⁸Ibid., p. 58.

being able to reconcile the difference between sin as darkness, being without the knowledge of God; and faith as light, being with knowledge of God, presupposes that prevenient grace is a form of supernatural grace, present to all even before they become aware of God's presence in their lives. And that this presence is the desire for life in all. It is this desire for life that leads us to the knowledge of our brokenness and alienation from God and the need for repentance.

Along with justification, Wesley puts forth the concept of sanctification or the New Birth. Justification precedes in an instant sanctification. For Wesley, justification represents a relative change--an inward renewal of the Spirit, a change in our relationship with God. Justification restores us to the favor of God by imparting to us, through faith, the knowledge of God. If we are without the knowledge of God, then it is hard for us to be in a relationship with God. And, if we are not in a relationship with God other kinds of relationships (worldly relationships to values, ethics, and morality) will become the objects of our faith and we will be in habitual sin and without the knowledge and favor of God.

Sanctification, on the other hand, represents a real change restoring us to the image of God which in turn renews and informs our relationship with ourselves and others. This is made possible because God first loved us and Jesus through his death atoned for our sinfulness, therefore, we become the recipients of God's generous gifts--justice, mercy and love. God through the work of the Holy Spirit and through our sanctification we are able to accept a new responsibility for our lives and the way in which we live them. This is best illustrated through

Christ's Sermon on the Mount when he sets before us the new way of life as it is pleasing to God and in keeping with the advent of God's kingdom in Jesus Christ.

Therefore, our renewal or new birth into a new life consists of two main focal points--the forgiveness of sins, guilt and its power over us and the "ethical regeneration of sanctification."²⁹

Understanding Wesley's concepts of sin as alienation and repentance as self-knowledge provides for us several helpful insights into the treatment of adult female incest survivors.

First, sin implies responsibility, that we had a choice whether or not to sin. Secondly, sin implies guilt. Taken together sin implies a broken trust, a misuse of something good. Repentance implies that we know we have abused our responsibility and further, we intend to make restitution and become responsible for that which God has entrusted to us.

For the incest survivor the concepts of sin and repentance are all too real for her. She has been forced to carry with her the guilt and shame of knowing that her incestuous relationship was wrong, but did not have the power, as a child to change it. The secrecy with which she must live informs her that she is an outcast, alienated from God and others, unworthy of being in relationship with another outside the sexual situation. The concepts of sin and repentance remain her reality of broken relationships, misplaced trust and judgement by God and others. For this is the reality that she has been told is real through the silence and unbelief of society. She has indeed been victimized by patriarchy,

²⁹Lindstrom, p. 92.

by her perpetrator (father, uncle, brother, grandfather or close relative/friend), and by society. Her sin is one of alienation from herself, God and others insofar as she was entangled in a web of sin.

My experience has been that the guilt felt by the incest survivor is the most overpowering feeling that needs to be dealt with early in treatment for her recovery. The doublebind of her guilt, that of knowing her incestuous relationship was wrong as well as experiencing pleasure at the same time, and her feelings of responsibility for the incest, can keep her immobilized. The case of A. is a good example of this doublebind and its immobilizing effects.

In reviewing A.'s case we can see that as a child she was made to feel responsible for her family. Her responsibilities were carried out by the many roles she was made to have--wife, housekeeper, caretaker, lover and daughter. While it would appear that A. had power because of her many roles, she in fact had none. She was powerless primarily because she had no choice in her roles and in addition as a teenager felt she had no options to exercise in leaving her family and living elsewhere.

Along with being responsible for the daily chores and upkeep of the house, A. also had the responsibility for meeting the needs of her parents. For her mother that entailed nursing care and housekeeper. For her father, that meant wifely duties from doing his laundry, to fixing his dinner, to sleeping with him. A.'s dilemma became critical and destructive to her when she began to recognize the fact that she enjoyed sleeping with her father. For A. that was time when they could be close and she felt loved and cared for.

As she matured into adulthood she escaped her family of origin

by marrying T. Her motives were primarily twofold--to leave her current living situation and to be taken care of and nurtured. Like her mother and father who gave away their responsibilities, A. gave to T. total responsibility for her care. In essence A. was attempting to be the child by being totally dependent on T. for all of her nurturing and adult responsibilities. Hence, we see what appears to be a reverse in roles for A.--that of being a responsible powerful child (pseudoadult) with many responsibilities to a child-like adult with no sense of responsibility for her actions as an adult. In this latter frame of reference the incest survivor assumes openly the victim role of having no power.

The dilemma faced by the pastoral counselor in this situation is to try and convey to A. that she was not responsible for the incest and, in fact, was victimized by her situation. Then helping her to realize that as an adult she is responsible for her actions and has the power to make adult choices.

Wesley sets up for us an interesting guideline and dilemma in addressing the incest survivor's sense of being sinful and her need for forgiveness. I believe that Wesley is correct in his concept of sin as that state of being alienated from God, self and others. However, one could make a distinction between the idea of being born sinners and the idea of having a bent toward sinning. This distinction seems an important correction to Wesley which recognizes the distinction between inherent and learned sin.

I believe that we do the incest survivor a great disservice to her healing if as pastoral counselors we deny her need to repent. However,

repentance implies that the victim had responsibility for the incest. This directly opposes the prescribed understanding of her role as a child in the event as well as currently understood treatment procedures which says she was a victim and not responsible for the incest.

Wesley's beginning point for salvation is our need for grace and repentance. He further states that as human beings we are totally corrupt being born sinners. And because we are born sinners and corrupt in nature there is nothing we can do to earn God's favor. Our forgiveness lies in the fact that grace is a gift from God, not something that we are responsible for or deserving of receiving.

The dilemma that Wesley and incest survivors put before us is the doublebind of receiving God's grace freely while at the same time being responsible adults. For the incest Survivor who feels totally responsible for the incest and who now accepts no responsibility for her actions, the idea of trying to get her to reverse her understandings of what is appropriate responsibility and inappropriate responsibility proves quite interesting.

However, if we can name for the survivor her quest for life by naming for her the sinfulness of the human condition instead of the actual burden of the sin being placed directly on her, I believe we can begin to reverse her understandings of what happened, her role in it and how she can redeem her childhood thereby drawing new strength from it for new ways of relating as an adult.

By naming the sinfulness of the human condition we do not name her as the sinner, or the one responsible for the incest. Wesley is quite correct when he claims that the human condition is corrupt and

sinful. Indeed, the very act of incest is a sin which alienates the victim from God, herself and others. Incest alienates the survivor from God in that she cannot conceive of God as being present in her life or why else would God let this happen to her. Incest alienates herself from herself because in order to survive she oftentimes closes off her emotions and assumes the role of someone other than herself. Many times survivors describe this by saying that they simply leave the situation emotionally and look at themselves as someone else in the situation. By doing this they can pretend that what is happening to them is not really happening to them. In addition, the survivor has been asked to play so many roles in her family that she no longer knows who she is--this can be seen in the case of A. Incest also alienates the survivor from others because of the secrecy which envelopes such situations. But perhaps the most devastating kind of alienation which occurs in incest is the total destruction of trust in the survivor's relational development. As a child she has been so betrayed that she no longer feels as though she can trust anyone with herself, thereby imposing self alienation from God, herself, and others.

Oftentimes simply naming the human condition as sinful as not enough for the survivor. Her guilt still overpowers her. In this case, if we take seriously the correction to Wesley about inherent and learned sin we can help the survivor to name what precisely it is she needs to repent for without placing the blame on her directly for the incest. I believe that the survivor does need to repent, for indeed she was a part in the situation insofar as she was caught in the web of sin of which she had no choice. By being a participant in the situation, the survivor

became a part of the human condition thereby making her a part of the sin. However, she has sinned insofar as she was caught up into the web of the sinfulness of the human condition, not that she was born inherently sinful. For being caught up into the situation and being victimized by it is what the survivor needs to repent of.

In addition, to helping her name the sinfulness of the human condition, the pastoral counselor can help her to name her search for wholeness and life by reframing for her her need to repent as God's prevenient grace in her life. To name God's forgiveness for her will hopefully help her to see God's presence in her life and enable her to transcend the painful reality of her past by opening to her new vistas of life. By putting into perspective her pain, her anger, her fragmentation and her sense of alienation she becomes empowered in order to reorder her life into responsible adult relationships.

If through repentance this transition can be made, from her feeling over responsible as a child to not feeling responsible as an adult to reversing her understanding that as a child she was victimized and as an adult she is responsible for her actions, she will be ready to begin the grief process. As part of her grieving process she can grieve what should have been, that of being a child and not a pseudoadult responsible for the care of her parents. As she grieves the loss of her childhood she can release her anger as righteous anger toward her perpetrator and not misplaced or misdirected anger toward her child or others that she is in daily living situations with. As she continues on in her grief process it is possible for her to become empowered with new energy geared toward responsible relational patterns. If she can

successfully to this then there is great potential for her redemption as a whole person, including the integration of her lost childhood.

Again, let me state that I believe that Wesley is correct in his concept of sin as that state of being alienated from God, self, and others. And through prevenient grace, that desire for life, we search for God to feed our impoverished spirits. And further, that through repentance and the receiving of grace through justification we do come to know ourselves. And that by repenting we can gain control of our lives and are no longer under the power of brokenness and alienation. I believe, however, that Wesley having chosen to begin his understanding of salvation with the concept of original sin is an error. In discussing his concept of sin he only alludes to the fact that we were created in perfection, in righteousness, in right relation with God, others and self. Instead of stressing original sin, the idea of "original blessing" might be a better starting point in the healing of the survivor. This is where I think feminist authors make their contribution in correcting and bringing about a new reality for the survivor.

As has been pointed out by such authors as Ruether, Daly and Fiorenza women have been taught as well as taught by our own experience that we are inferior, we are corrupt, and that we are to blame for the fall of humankind. In addition, we are taught that to be submissive and obedient are virtues. And yet when violence is perpetuated against us we should have known better than to let it happen or else we were asking for it. In other words, we have been victimized by a double standard.

Feminist authors, I think, are correct in making these corrections to where salvation should begin. But like Wesley, they too fall short.

For while Wesley begins with original sin feminist writers deny that there exists any real need for the survivor to repent for her participation in the incestuous situation. They are correct, I believe, in their stance that the child was the victim, and, therefore, not responsible for the act. However, I feel they do a disservice to the healing of the victim by denying her need to repent.

Repentance implies responsibility and this is in direct conflict with their philosophy of victim and perpetrator. However, if we examine closely Wesley's concept and disregard his hierarchal understanding of sin and repentance then indeed we can find a new reality with new images for salvation.

Wesley refers to sin as alienation, that of being separated from God, others and self. I think he is correct in setting this as the reality for sin. But while this is the reality of sin it is also the reality out of which salvation occurs.

Feminists have brought to light for us the impact and ramifications of this alienation that of the elevation of spirit over matter, male over female, and reason over passion. As a result of these kinds of splits it is no wonder that we are an alienated people. What each has to offer to the other, Wesley in dialog in the feminists and the feminists in dialog with Wesley, is their unique understanding of wholeness. The difference between them is their position or place of observation. Wesley views the world through the eyes of a male and feminists through the eyes of a female. Carol Gilligan writes that:

Conceptions of the human life cycle (the process of being sanctified) represent attempts to order and make coherent the unfolding experiences and perceptions, the changing wishes and realities of everyday life.

But the nature of such conceptions depends in part in the position of the observer.³⁰

Both Wesley and feminists are attempting to change our position. For Wesley this means a change from darkness into light, death into life, illness into health. Feminists likewise are making the same movements, however, they are challenging us to seek, redefine, and re-interpret the traditional understanding of those splits that have, in fact, caused our very alienation. Each then are trying to bring about healing from their own places of observation or experiences in the world.

The good news that feminists bring to our understanding of the meaning of salvation is liberation from a fragmented self-understanding--liberation transformed by the glimpse of a new type of social personality, a new humanity appropriate to earth. Ruether claims that "one might call this a new religion, if one understands by this the prophetic vision to shape a new world on earth, and not an alienated spirituality."³¹ If we integrate the feminist understanding of alienation then there provides the opportunity for repentance for both survivor and perpetrator.

Susan Griffin defines our search for wholeness as eros. She says that eros integrates body, mind and spirit. Our bodies, which temporarily house our mind and spirit is the means by which we can know objects, persons and events. The way we think and feel about ourselves, as bodies, will always find expression in the way we think and feel

³⁰ Carol Gilligan, In A Different Voice: Psychological Theory and Women's Development (Cambridge: Harvard University Press, 1982) p. 5.

³¹ Rosemary Radford Ruether, New Woman, New Earth: Sexist Ideologies and Human Liberation (New York: Seabury Press, 1983) p. 211.

about ourselves, as bodies, will always find expression in the way we think and feel about the world and God.

When our bodies cease to be fully personal and integrated, our relationships to others are diminished in their personal meanings. The world, God's creation, and all that lies therein become foreign, alien and hostile.³²

The Bible is the story that affirms our relationship to God, to others, and to ourselves. "Biblical theology asserts that we are not only created in community but also for community. That this is our destiny."³³

However, in the face of such alienating dualisms as spiritualistic and sexist, we must ask questions that go beyond those already asked by theologians and philosophers. Their questions and answers have not empowered the incest survivor, but rather left unquestioned and unchallenged the traditional interpretations of male superiority. Here is where feminist theologians can correct the inherent assumptions in Wesley's articulation of sin and repentance.

Wesley begins with original sin and the fall of humankind. He speaks of this in terms of carnal knowledge which one could agree perpetuates the myth of blaming the woman because she introduced Adam to carnal knowledge instead of addressing Adam's own responsibility in the act of eating the apple. It is in this reinterpretation and new kind of inquiry by asking the basic questions of life from a different position--from the female's position--that provides the kind of safe place for the incest victim to repent.

I believe Wesley was correct in saying that all persons need

³²James B. Nelson, Embodiment: An Approach To Sexuality and Christian Theology (Minneapolis: Augsburg, 1978) pp. 20-21.

³³Ibid., p. 29.

to repent in order to be saved. I believe, however, that his context is the wrong context or starting point--not original sin, but "original blessing" should be the context.³⁴ By changing Wesley's context I do not believe that feminist therapists interpret repentance correctly either. Certainly they are correct that the victim was indeed sinned against (injured) if understood in Wesley's context of original sin. However, I think that they too are starting with original sin and not original blessing.

It is my belief that our primary relationship--that is, our first relationship, is with God. And that incest or sin is learned and not inherited. For the incest survivor repentance is crucial. It is crucial not because they were or are responsible for what happened to them as children, but rather they are, in fact, alienated. Whether this alienation is in reality fact or fiction, perpetuated or unperpetuated, it remains that for their healing they stand in need of forgiveness. Forgiveness in this sense implies that they are ready to move into a responsible position for taking control of their lives. It is important because the victim feels a deep sense of responsibility for what happened to her and needs forgiveness before any other movement in the process of healing can take place. By seeking repentance, that feeling of responsibility for what happened is put into perspective and reframed for her. This is done by reinterpreting or confirming for her her reality as a victim. By hearing her confession we hear her story. By absolving

³⁴ Matthew Fox, Original Blessing: A Primer in Creation Spirituality Presented in Four Paths, Twenty-Six Themes and Two Questions (Santa Fe: Bear, 1983) Front Cover.

her of her guilt, the pastoral counselor provides for the means of entering into salvation. In addition, by hearing her confession and absolving her of her guilt, we create a new starting point for her, by affirming original blessing instead of original sin.

When original sin is reinterpreted as original blessing it allows the pastoral counselor to reimage God as forgiving, caring, nurturing and just. This by no means says that what happened to them is alright or that it did not happen. Rather, it allows God the opportunity to redeem her situation, by vindicating her integrity as a good and not evil person, insofar as she was caught up into a sinful situation. It also broadens her frame of reference to her understanding of reality by establishing a larger reality, one that transcends her chaos.

Incest has alienated us from ourselves, our neighbor and from God. For the child of God, however, alienation is never the last word. From whence comes our salvation? From God's grace. And grace, as Wesley says, is relational. It is the act of being in relationship with integrity. Wesley would refer to this restoration of integrity as justification and sanctification, that the survivor has been justified by the deliverance of guilt and restored to a relationship with God. Wesley would say then that a relative change had taken place in the incest survivor. While at the same time the survivor has been justified, she has also entered into the process of sanctification. Justification takes away the guilt that has crippled and distorted the incest survivor's reality, while the new birth, in essence, takes away the power of the incestuous event itself, and releases its grip on her. This release allows for the redemption of God's action in her life. The

effects of justification are an inner peace, a sense of hope, and restoration of love in the survivor's life.

This concept of restoration and forgiveness is imperative to the salvation of the incest survivor. Wesley helps us understand that healing for the incest survivor includes the experience of unconditional love and acceptance of God. Faith is what is in crisis for the survivor at this point in her process of sanctification. Faith in the acceptance and trust of God's love for her that she will be able to accept love and reinterpret her existence as a whole person. As Wesley claims "the only faith of value is one that operates through love."³⁵ Faith then "becomes the means by which love is the end."³⁶

In this sense the incest survivor learns to love herself, not as she has been taught, as a purely sexual being, but rather as someone who has more to offer than her body. In fact, by reframing her reality as something larger and more powerful than what she has been taught, her body is also redeemed as something good and not bad or dirty. In this way she is able to move past the idea of being a damaged product and allows her to redefine who she is in new terms appropriate to her context and the context of her lost virginity.

It is in the issue of faith (the ability to trust again), that feminist writers offer further insight into Wesley's thinking. Wesley says that assurance comes along with justification--the assurance of God's love and the efficacy of Christ's atoning act on our behalf.

³⁵Lindstrom, p. 100.

³⁶Ibid., p. 101

However, as Marie Fortune points out:

A victim who feels that God has abandoned her cannot be convinced of God's faithfulness and presence by even the most persuasive and articulate pastor or counselor. The victim will only know it through their experience. We can accept and not condemn this feeling of abandonment mindful of the fact that even Jesus experienced the same feeling. We can identify with their fear and bear witness to our lives in times of suffering. Furthermore, our presence can mediate God's presence during a victim's recovery...³⁷

"This inability to trust is directly related to the victim's low self-esteem and past experiences of betrayal. Feelings of alienation can only be overcome through experiencing more satisfying interpersonal relationships with others," says Suzanne Sgroi.³⁸

If, as Wesley says, "the new life is to persist and grow, activity on God's part must always be accompanied by activity on our part."³⁹ Then for the incest survivor to move out in faith is for her to move from her role as a victim into the role of a survivor--that person who takes responsibility for their life. What this means for the survivor is that not only has there been a relative change in the understanding of who she is but a real change as well. Wesley refers to this as an "ethical transformation of heart and life," i.e., a new set of priorities, a new vision, a new context.⁴⁰ This ethical transformation empowers the survivor to break her self-destructive patterns by putting her experience.

³⁷ Marie M. Fortune, Sexual Violence the Unmentionable Sin: An Ethical and Pastoral Perspective (New York: Pilgrim Press, 1983) p. 204.

³⁸ Sgroi, p. 123.

³⁹ Lindstrom, p. 117.

⁴⁰ Ibid., p. 102.

into perspective and making concrete changes in her behavior and life situation.

This transformation is essential because it allows God to redeem and reconcile the incestuous experience and the survivor. Why is this reconciliation and redemption necessary? Because we are children of God first, and related to all else in order to facilitate that primary relationship. We are not, nor can we ever fully be, ourselves until reconciled to God. This is not to say that the injustice that was inflicted upon the survivor is made into a just and excusable situation, rather, it means to "renew that broken relationship on new terms."⁴¹ And what are these new terms? Wesley using the Apostle Paul as his reference point says that the immediate fruits of the Spirit, this transformation--love, peace and joy as lived out in the faith of love--are marks of the redeemed and reconciled life. And further, it is by and through the grace of God that we live our lives, not by earthly wisdom and standards but in the new reality that has been made possible for us through the atoning act of Christ. The atonement makes available to us, through our own choosing, that process through which we are healed.

For the incest survivor the transformation from guilt, fear, anger, depression, mistrust, etc., as a way of life into a life of love, peace and joy seems almost elusive to her. It is making this transition into a new life that feminists help to articulate through new images and meanings what Wesley is saying to us.

First, they recognize that no justice exists in what happened to

⁴¹Fortune, p. 213.

the survivor. Ideally as well as ethically, the perpetrator should ask for forgiveness. In doing this there would then be a sense of the injustice inflicted. However, this is not always the case. By recognizing this, feminist therapists help the survivor to understand that she was not to blame for what happened to her, and because of this she has reason to be angry. My concern with some feminist therapists at this point is their reluctance to help the victim move out of her anger and re-channel that energy into productive and constructive ways of relating to men.

Secondly, feminists, by addressing and affirming the injustice of the incestuous situation, break the isolation, secrecy and stigma around the incident and victim. In doing this they bring the victim out from behind her hiding and into full connection with others who share in her sense and reference of brokenness.

Thirdly, feminist therapists help the victim make the transformation Wesley speaks of by affirming the victim's strength for survival. Here is where Wesley informs and corrects feminist therapists by saying that there is more than just survival, there is the abundant life, not life as you have known it in the past but life truly filled with love, peace and joy.

The reality of redemption as spoken of by Wesley is perhaps beyond our comprehension. But he points out that as part of the process of being sanctified are works of piety and works of mercy.

The works of piety include prayer, reading Scripture, receiving the sacraments, and worship. It is through the unique tools of the pastoral counselor that we can bring into focus and make sense of a

broader frame of reference out of which the survivor can find new life. Included in that frame of reference is that power greater than ourselves who has the authority with which to transform and redeem our brokenness and alienation thereby making possible the works of mercy. And that works of mercy according to Wesley, "manifest themselves in acts of love."⁴²

When queried by the lawyer about which is the great commandment in the law, Jesus replied: "You shall love the Lord your God with all your heart, and with all your soul, and with all your mind. And a second is like it, you shall love your neighbor as yourself. On these two commandments depend all the law and the prophets." It is this law of love brought into life through Christ, made available to the survivor through the means of grace, manifested in the acts of prayer, confession, forgiveness, and the sacraments, that brings the survivor full circle in her healing, to the ability to forgive her perpetrator. When the survivor is able to forgive her perpetrator then there will truly be a sense of justice brought into her life. And with the restoration of this justice the incest survivor will begin to have an understanding of the new reality called the abundant life to which we are all called.

A Personal Reflection

In summary, I believe several important insights need to be highlighted with regard to Wesley's contribution to contemporary theology and psychology and the contribution and corrections that feminist theologians and therapists bring to Wesley in the treatment of incest.

⁴²Lindstron, p. 116.

Wesley has, indeed, contributed significantly to the healing process of the adult female incest survivor. As has been pointed out there are limitations to his theological understanding of salvation that need to be in dialog with contemporary theologians and in particular feminist theologians. However, the use of Wesley's theological understanding of the order of salvation as a guideline in the treatment of incest is a vital beginning point. It is vital because he addresses the issues of sin, repentance, absolution, guilt and grace. In essence, he brings into focus the critical spiritual issues facing the incest survivor.

It has been said of Wesley that his understanding of salvation is too individualistic. It is not my purpose here to make a case either way, except to say that, in my opinion, the way he outlines his theology of salvation is most relevant for the survivor. And to say that it is relevant to the healing process of the survivor is also to say that it is an important and guiding process in pastoral counseling. In addition, it is my belief that the individual spiritual healing of the survivor is the most important, but not the only, healing that needs to take place. I believe this because I hold that all persons are children of God. And in that we are all children of God; spiritual alienation from our creator will, if not addressed, work itself out in other kinds of alienation--personal relationships, work relationships and daily patterns of living.

Wesley provides the theological framework out of which the incest survivor can begin her journey back into health, beginning with grace, moving through repentance and justification, and into sanctification. His process provides the foundation out of which the pastoral counselor can become the channel of God's grace enabling the survivor to

transcend her chaotic reality. When the good news of God's salvation has been heard, the survivor's spiritual healing has begun, enabling her to move toward the redemption and integration of her past experiences.

It is through the receiving of grace and the movement into sanctification that feminist theologians and therapists correct Wesley by reframing some of his theological positions. For example, their corrections and subsequent contribution to his meaning of alienation--Wesley names alienation as that state of being separated from God because of our inherent sinfulness. Feminists have named alienation as that elevation of male over female, mind over body, and reason over passion, which results in our alienation from God, self and others.

In addition, the work of feminists help to enable the survivor to move past the feelings of isolation and destruction by naming the situation as sinful and connecting her with others who have shared in similar experiences of incestuous situations. It is by this naming and connecting that the survivor is enabled and empowered to enter into her daily environment where she must reconstruct and recreate her life.

In short, the contribution made by feminist theologians and therapists address the issue of justice. The writers highlighted in this paper, as well as others, have with clarity of truth brought to the forefront the injustices of history--especially those injustices perpetuated against women in general and incest survivors in particular.

They have recognized the importance of righteous anger and the need for restitution as essential pieces in the survivor's healing process. With the recognition of these pieces comes the help needed to affirm and validate a shattered and silenced past and the hope that justice will

be forthcoming for what the survivor has endured.

Together Wesley and feminist theologians and therapists have articulated for us a new means out of which we as pastoral counselors can bring into a tangible workable reality the process of transforming an alienated and broken life. Together they work in tandem and because they do they cannot be separated. To separate them would be to leave the survivor's therapy incomplete, if not her healing and ability to function in the world creatively as a child of God.

Left to work in tandem, each with their own integrity intact, Wesley and feminist therapists provide the vision and the means for the survivor to enter into the Kingdom of God and the abundant life.

However, the process does not stop here. To simply heal individual brokenness and alienation, to facilitate reconciliation as something individualistic or just between an individual and God dismisses the importance of systemic brokenness and corporate healing.⁴³ If we are to love our neighbors as ourselves, we cannot take our ease until she is dealt with justly. For justice is at the heart of love. Unlike compassion or mercy which are responses to the immediate plight of the victim, justice challenges us to change attitudes, laws, and customs--in short, to modify the system that creates the victim and perpetuates injustice.

⁴³Gail Burruss, "General Characteristics of Patriarchal Ethics," Women United in Theologizing and Action: Theological Perspectives on Violence Against Women (Loveland, OH: Grailville, 1978) p. 15.

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